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IN DREAMS.

BY GLEN CAROL.

Last night when sleep her balmy crown
Upon my temples pressed,
Within the mystic land of dreams
I found the longed-for rest.
And years of anguish dark and long,
Were swept like mist away,
Forgotten woe and want and wrong,
That throng the weary day.

Again the summer-time was near
Of love and hope and youth—
Again within your eyes I read
A pure and perfect truth.
Once more we trod the paths of old,
The dear familiar scenes
Were round us, and my happy heart
Went revelling—in dreams.

For us alone the flowers bloomed,
And wild-bird carols rang—
For us alone the glad sun shone,
And silver brooklets sang—
And all the world seemed fresh and fair;
Within that gracious day
Were hopes like jewels proudly set,
To shine for us alway!

But while we stood with fast-clasped hands,
A shadow o'er us fell—
Your face was blotted from my sight,
As by some magic spell—
And once again my eyes unclosed
To meet the weary day—
Love, hope, and happiness, and youth
Had vanished, all away!

JESSIE DALE.

The Conductor's Daughter;

OR,

The Plot Against the Pennsylvania Railroad.

BY BURR THORNBURY, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF "ST. LEGER'S LOVE," "RAVENSWOOD," "SHALE, THE SCOUT," "ANNIE AYRE," ETC.

THE BRIDGE OVER THE NESHAMINY CREEK TAMPERED WITH.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OWL LINE.

Midnight!

Along its iron path swiftly sped the midnight train; with its precious freight of human lives.

Through the darkness shone the headlight of the locomotive like the eye of a Cyclops, illuminating the track with a rushing radiance, and seeming to show the monster that followed the way he could with safety go.

To many—to most, perhaps, save those accustomed to it—this apparently blind rushing through the night, on board a railroad train, gives at times a thrilling sense of insecurity. It seems like madness. By rivers that flow darkly below, and whose drowning waves are sometimes seen to glitter balefully in the glancing, gliding light which strikes their surface; over frail bridges, under which gloom the black waters; on the brink of precipices, down which to be hurled would be almost certain death; sometimes over house-tops, and again through damp and dismal tunnels roll the rapid wheels, with only those narrow lines of iron to keep them true.

Of course the danger is but little greater than by day. The traveller seeks the sleeping-coach, and passes the night in slumber. Yet often a thought is given to the terrible possibility of a plunge into some watery chasm or down some rocky embankment, and he shudders as the picture of such an awakening—which death may make very brief—forces itself upon his mind.

The dangers of railway travel are always positive and present, though safety of transit is always to be presumed upon. A man in a moving sleeping-car is *not* as safe as he is in his own bed, albeit the house may be struck by lightning and he killed, while the car and its occupants may reach their destination without disaster or delay; but unless he is a hardened veteran of a traveller, he will be apt to remark to himself, even if unconsciously, as he retires in the former, that there is a definite possibility of his never beholding the light of day again. He will think this thought as the train roars along through the night, when, with a daytime view of his position and its possible perils, he would not give one moment's heed to them.

The Owl train, in charge of Conductor Dale, was on its way from city to city. Its name was appropriately given it because of its night-time running.

"Keep a particularly sharp look-out ahead, Edwards," the conductor had said to the engineer before they left the depot. The latter had promised faithfulness, though neither the request nor the promise was necessary in the case of one so capable and watchful as Edwards. He knew, too, that the conductor had really not intended an admonition, further than to give expression to an anxiety they both felt.

"If we could only catch some of these rascals in the act!" said Edwards. "Wouldn't we make short work with them!"

"I'd thrust 'em under the boiler," said Fireman Phillips.

"A good idea," returned the engineer. "They'll have to burn hereafter, and we might as well use their brimstone bodies now."

He was a stalwart, manly fellow, this engineer; not over twenty-eight years of age, bright and honest-eyed, black haired and white-throated, with a sort of rugged beauty, quite attractive. He was one of those honest, able, trusty, valued working men, intelligent and sensible, who are not ashamed to be known as the sons of labor; who don't fret because they can't be bank clerks or salesmen; but who go to work and keep at it, earn good wages, buy themselves a pleasant home, marry some good, lovable girl, and live as happy, independent and self-respecting as other people.

Honor to such! and especial honor to Engineer Edwards, for he was one of the very best of them.

He had not obtained a wife yet, but he was betrothed to as sweet and sensible a girl as ever earned her own honest living, and supported a sick mother besides.

As his train moved along, Engineer Edwards had some reflections of his own, though not for one moment did he relax his vigilance to indulge in them.

"It's a little curious this devil-business, as I call it," he said to himself: "throwing a train from the track, or attempting to, is about as bad a game as a fellow need want to play. Seems to me there appears to be more fun than ever in it to those who try it. What's the object, I wonder? or, rather, I don't *wonder*, but just say it. *I* have my opinion, and Dale has his. He may be part right, and I think I am, too. There's a fellow in the city behind us who I know perfectly well would be glad to see old Winiminta plunge down a hundred-foot embankment and me under her. Wouldn't he, old girl?"

He appealed to his locomotive as if it were a human thing; as to him indeed it was. Between it and himself the most friendly and confidential relations existed, and if Winiminta had chosen she could have told all the secrets of Engineer Edwards's life.

He kept nothing from her. She knew Lizzie Allen's name as well as he did; she knew that this same Lizzie was the sweetest and best girl in the whole city; and she knew the very tender and satisfactory character of the intercourse of the two. She approved of it also, for Manton Edwards was a very good master to her, and she was sure he would be a very good husband to Lizzie.

"Yes," continued the engineer, "he would not only rejoice at such an occurrence, but if he isn't too great a coward wouldn't mind loosening a rail or blocking the track to bring it about. He don't forget the flogging I gave him for his impudence to me and his insults to *her*. No, no, but I don't fear him, only he is one to strike in the dark. Let me get a chance at him again, and *then* see! The ruffian! to think he is good enough for Lizzie Allen! I wonder that she will have anything to do with me even, and I am sure, if I do say it myself, I am some better than Jack Clayton—the drinking, idle, insolent scrub, with his bow-legs and his womanish hands. Lizzie, bless her! says she likes a hard hand—and—and a soft heart. It's t'other way about with Jack. The idea of him presuming to think of getting Lizzie! and then following her up after she has given him to understand very plainly that his attentions are not desirable. About one more drubbing will take such nonsense out of him. I thought I had gone too far the last time—it *was* rather hard on him; in public, too—but he is firing-up again. What do you think of it, my pet?"

Winaminta gave a long, loud, triumphant whistle.

"Approves of it," muttered her master. "That is, of the drubbing."

But very soon a different sound came from her iron throat—the sudden, sharp, shrill warning of "down brakes."

"What's up now?" wondered the engineer as he shut off steam. "A red lantern swinging like a ship-light."

The brakes had been applied, and the train had slowed down almost to a stop.

"We always mind the red," muttered Edwards. "What's wrong ahead there?" he next demanded as the wheels rested entirely.

"There's enough wrong, as you soon can satisfy yourself," returned a voice. "It's well I stopped you or you would have gone down."

"Gone down!"

"This way, if you please," said the figure bearing the lantern.

The conductor and engineer both left the train and went forward.

"Anything the matter with the bridge?" inquired the former.

"Look for yourselves."

The unknown man jumped from the road-bed, followed by the other two, and held his lantern so that its rays revealed the track-timbers of the bridge.

"Diabolical!" ejaculated Conductor Dale.

"Curse them who've done this!" cried Engineer Edwards.

The supporting timbers bore fresh marks of an auger and other instruments of similar use, which had been employed to weaken the structure so that the next train in crossing would crush it down.

"You have done us and others a great service, sir," said Mr. Dale, addressing him who had given this timely warning.

The conductor peered by the lantern-light into the stranger's face. The red rays fell upon it, showing the fair, handsome features of a young man whose countenance seemed strangely familiar to him.

"Yes, sir, I acknowledge that I have," said Cecil Parnell, for it was he, quite composedly.

"If you could have caught those villains for us you would have added to the obligation. How did you discover their work? Excuse me though for a time; I must see that we are not run into from behind, as the Owl has been before. Edwards, please examine the bridge further. I do not think any serious damge has been done yet. The scoundrels must have been frightened off."

"They were, sir," said Cecil Parnell.

Mr. Dale hurried back to the train, meeting as he went many of the passengers who were anxious to know what had occasioned the delay.

"What's up, conductor?" was their inquiry.

"Bridge tampered with," he said as he passed them.

Reaching the train, he found a considerable ferment of impatience prevailing among the remaining passengers—or some of them at least.

"Are we to stay here all night?" was demanded.

"You are better off here, I suppose, than in the bottom of the Neshaminy," returned Conductor Dale, quietly.

Who has not noticed that if a delay occur to a train, a certain proportion of the passengers on board begin almost immediately to fidget—some to openly complain. "Forward, forward," they say, if not in words, in expression. If they go forward, and disaster follows, these same individuals are (if they survive) apt to be inconsistent enough to censure.

It is hard to please everybody.

The train was made safe against being run into from behind, and then the conductor went ahead to the engineer again.

"We can cross," said Edwards. "There's no great damage done the bridge—not because it wasn't intended though."

"All aboard then!" called Conductor Dale.

"You will go with us?" he said, addressing Cecil Parnell.

"Yes; I wish to go to P—— to-night. Besides, I desire to give you what information I can respecting this frustrated attempt to cause disaster to the train."

"Certainly, sir; we shall be glad to receive it."

The whistle sounded, and the train was again in motion. Conductor Dale at the first opportunity sought the young man.

"How did you happen to learn of the intentions of these villains?" he inquired.

"I can only say at present—trusting you will believe me"—replied Cecil Parnell, "that I overheard a plot to wreck this train; and obtaining the details of it, I hastened at once to frustrate it. I was in Princeton at the time; I procured a red lantern of one of the railway employees; took the evening train for the station we have just passed; alighted there and sought to assure myself if this wicked work was really to be done. I concealed myself near the bridge, and waiting and watching there until nearly midnight, I at last discovered the wretches engaged in weakening the supports."

"Why did you not obtain assistance and have these villains caught at the work?" asked Mr. Dale, with a certain sternness as of suspicion.

"If you will believe me, sir, I had a particular object in doing as I did." The young plotter lowered his voice to a most mysterious tone as he continued: "What that object is, I leave you for the present to guess, only intimating to you as a responsible employee of the company, that the ends of justice may be better served by the most cautious action in this matter. Delay may secure more important revelations than those of this night. Perhaps you understand me, sir?"

Mr. Dale, knowing all he did, did not press his inquiries, but acknowledged that such a policy might be best.

"Only," he added, "I do not wish to lose sight of you on the company's account. If you are honest and your representations are found to be true, you will be richly rewarded for the service you have done us."

"I care not for that; I only wish to further serve you."

"You will give me your name?" said Mr. Dale, taking out his note-book.

"Certainly, sir; Wilmer Durrance."

"And your address?"

"No. 6—, Green street, Philadelphia."

"Why, that is very near my own home," remarked the conductor in some surprise as he took down the number.

"Ah!" said Cecil Parnell *alias* Wilmer Durrance.

"Yes; have you been there long?"

"Only a few days, sir."

"It may be that we have met before; your face seems familiar, but I cannot recall any occasion of such meeting."

"You may have seen me on your train, sir," replied the plotter, quietly. "I frequently pass over this road. *Your* face is very well known to me, Mr. Dale."

"Very likely; no doubt it is here—on this road—that I have seen you. Since you live so near my own residence, I shall be glad to extend my acquaintance with you."

"Nothing could be more agreeable," returned Cecil in delight hardly to be sufficiently repressed, as he saw how well his plan was working. "If you will call to-morrow evening you will find me at home, and I may have some very interesting communications to make to you in connection with this subject that has brought us together."

"I will see you, if you please, as early as six o'clock," said Mr. Dale. "My duties prevent a later interview."

The conductor was pleased with the young man, notwithstanding an indefinable suspicion forced itself upon his mind. Had he not known that there was secret mischief a-foot, he might have regarded this romantic-looking youth as acting very strangely; but now there might be excellent reason for his mysterious reticence. It might be, as he had intimated, that he was seeking to unmask not only a few villains, but the whole remorseless crew who were engaged in the great conspiracy of which we have spoken, and who, as a preliminary step to success, were endeavoring to remove a few lives that stood in the way of their triumph.

When the train reached its destination, conductor Dale spoke a cordial word of parting; and Cecil Parnell, pleasantly responding, walked across the depot-floor, secretly chuckling with intensest satisfaction as he reflected how well he had succeeded in his night's work.

"My face seems familiar to him," he said to himself. "Yes; but he will never think of me as Annabel Smith; the change is too entire. Now, Jessie, we are promised another meeting soon. I wonder what *you*, my sweet, will think of your new acquaintance? Your father has not invited me to his house as yet, but I can manage that part, I do not doubt."

CHAPTER XII.

A PRISONER.

When Beatrice Rowland opened her eyes in consciousness, it was with such a confused sense of bewilderment and fear as she had never before experienced.

She was alone, and in a luxuriously furnished chamber. The gas was burning brightly, and she glanced wildly around the apartment.

"Where am I?" was her terrified thought. "Something dreadful has happened, I know. I felt myself sinking, sinking into slumber, and I knew that it was not right—that it meant danger—that some fresh villainy was being practiced; yet I could not rouse myself; I could only yield to that strange, alarming stupor. Oh, where am I? Jessie; Mr. Dale! Oh, my kind friends, I am not with you. This is a new place—a prison to which I have been brought by my enemies."

She heard a soft footstep outside. It seemed to pause at her door. She arose, thinking to ascertain who was there. She approached the door, and endeavored to open it.

It was locked.

"A prisoner!" she moaned. "Torn, I know not how, from my dear protectors! Oh, Heaven, be merciful to wretched me!"

While she stood trembling and praying there, the door was opened, and a soft, feminine voice said—

"Does missus want anything?"

The poor lady had looked toward the entrance—but, though she knew a human figure was before her, she saw nothing. A blindness swept over her vision. She felt weak, and strange, and fainting. The effect of the drug she had swallowed was yet upon her.

"Come in," she managed to say, in reply to the question that had been addressed her. "Your voice sounds kindly; come and help me."

A quadroon-woman entered the room, with a soft, gliding grace of movement. She was not over thirty years of age; of regular features—beautiful, she might almost be called; her person was of faultless mould; her dress, rich and simple; and altogether, she was one who but for her color, might be regarded as fitted to command rather than to serve.

"Missus will please lie down," she said, gently, conducting her to a large lounge.

"Where am I? And who are you?" asked Mrs. Rowland.

"Missus, never mind questioning now; wait awhile until she is better."

"I am not ill."

"No, no; but the sleep-stuff; it makes her feel so queer."

"I have been drugged, then?"

"Missus will talk; please take this first."

The quadroon handed her a wine-glass containing some bright-colored liquid, which, it might be thought, had been previously prepared for this use.

"It is not *more* of the—the—"

"No; it will take the sleep away."

Mrs. Rowland drained the glass—and then, under the reviving influence of the draught, resumed her questioning.

"Why was I brought to this place?"

"Missus knows better than I."

"Ah, yes; I know, I suppose," she sighed. "Are you a servant here, my good woman?"

"Yes," she answered; "servant and housekeeper also."

"And do you know that those who employ you are wicked men?"

"I don't *know* it; but I 'spect so. They's good to me though; they pays me well."

"And would you do wrong for money?"

"I'd rather do good; but pears as if good ain't so profitble."

"Alas, that it should not be. Who is in this house beside ourselves?"

"Mr. Marbury and—"

"Jay Marbury?" interrupted Mrs. Rowland, with visible apprehension.

"Don't know whether it's *j* or *k* or what; I calls him Mr. Marbury. A large, han'some man, missus."

"It is *he*, I fear—I know," said Mrs. Rowland to herself. "Who else?"

"Mr. Gray and sometimes young Mr. Parnell; but he's gone now."

"Are there any others?"

"My husband, missus."

"You are married then."

"Yes."

"And your name is?"

"Lucy, missus."

"Lucy what?"

"I don't know that there's anything more," said the quadroon, with a laugh. "I'm a down-south nigger."

"Pray do not apply that vulgar term to yourself; you look more like a lady."

Lucy grinned, displaying her beautiful pearl-white teeth

"But I ain't though," she said.

"You are certainly kind and—"

"No, I ain't, missus; I'm wicked; a real gone sinner."

"I do not believe it," said Mrs. Rowland.

"If I wasn't I wouldn't be here; there ain't no good in this house."

"I fear not," shuddered Mrs. Rowland.

"'Less it's yourself, missus, which I didn't mean for to include. They ain't mean, bad folks either, only they ain't good. They're up to queer things. But *you're* safe, missus; jest as safe as I am. Mr. Marbury will be as kind to you as anybody could be; and as for Mr. Gray, he's a perfect gem'man, only—"

"I do not think that any perfect gentleman could aid or abet this wicked scheme of abducting me," said Mrs. Rowland, sarcastically, forgetting in part her fears after hearing such assurances of safety.

"Now it's like, missus," answered Lucy, "these gem'men have particular reason for wanting to see you; and maybe you had the same for *not* wanting to see them. But they've got you, and you may 'bleve me they will treat you fair."

"But you admitted that they were bad men."

"So they is, but don't you see, missus, that there's different kinds of bad?—big bad and little bad; mean bad and nice bad; bad bad and good bad."

"Ah, my friend—for such I feel that you are—you must know that evil is all of one quality. The magnitude of a crime is no mitigation of its spirit."

"La, now! ain't it?" exclaimed the quadroon, as if she were receiving a new idea. "Well, *I* likes the generous thing, and that's what seems to be done by the folks that I does for in this house. Never knowed such folks before."

"I fear that the large returns they obtain from their wicked enterprises enable them to be liberal with their money, but that their hearts are sin-hardened and worldly and given to Satan," sighed Mrs. Rowland.

"No, they ain't, missus, persisted the quadroon, rather contradicting her former words. "They're not so bad as that by a heap."

"But they have torn me from my friends, and I know their designs toward me are most villainous."

"Mr. Marbury said missus was to go *back* to her friends."

"No, no; they are my enemies to whom he would take me. Oh, I trust you will not lend yourself to the wicked work of assisting him. Perhaps you will aid me to escape."

"Sorry missus is set against these gem'man; but *I* couldn't help her to get away nohow. *I'm sworn* to do as they wants me, and they'd kill me if I didn't. I knows that."

Mrs. Rowland's countenance assumed its despairing expression. For a little time, in the presence of this woman, who was so gentle in speech and manner, and who could not be wholly bad, she had felt a revival of hope, but now the old fear returned.

"How long have I been here?" she asked after a brief pause.

"It's coming daytime now, and missus knows when she first didn't know."

Yes; she recalled the cheerful scene in the dining-room at the Dales, before the change came; she remembered hearing the clock strike as they sat at the table.

"How was I conveyed here, Lucy?"

"In a carriage, I b'leves."

"In what part of the city am I?"

"Missus mustn't ask too many questions; I daren't tell."

"I suppose not. What matters it where I am, since I am a prisoner? I can only hope that you, Lucy, will be my jailoress."

"I am, missus."

"I am glad of that; you will not be a cruel one."

"Oh, no; only very close; missus must 'spect to have me about nigh all the time."

"I will not object to that," said Mrs. Rowland.

She looked at the quadroon closely. As the woman had informed her, she was evidently from the South. The introduction of phrases common to that region into her speech was of itself enough to warrant such a conclusion. Besides, there was that peculiar subserviency of manner rarely to be found in such perfection among any but those once held to servitude.

"Will missus prepare to go down now?" she inquired.

"To the parlor?"

"No, to missus' own sitting-room."

"Am I to have a private parlor?"

"Yes, all to herself. Hi! it ain't such a bad place."

"I want my freedom, Lucy. I am wickedly confined here, and—"

"Would missus please talk to Mr. Marbury about *that?*" interrupted the quadroon, with a smile.

Mrs. Rowland saw that her attendant was, at least for the present, firmly loyal to her masters.

Arranging her dress as best she could, but disdaining to put on a single article of the rich and varied attire, which Lucy informed her was for her use if she chose to wear it, Mrs. Rowland descended one flight of stairs to the apartment which was to be her prison-parlor.

It had but one window, which looked out upon a dwelling whose deserted appearance proclaimed it unoccupied.

"Nobody lives there," said Lucy, as if to intimate that it was useless to hope that some one might there be found to appeal to for help.

"I am indeed a prisoner," reflected the lady, despairingly.

CHAPTER XIII.

GETTING IN BY DECEIT.

Cecil Parnell as Wilmer Dorrance so ingratiated himself in Conductor Dale's favor when the latter called upon him, and presented such evidences of his respectability, that he was cordially invited to return the call whenever he felt so disposed.

Cecil was of course well pleased at this, since it was just what he had plotted for.

He was not a villain by nature, but having commenced life as a page in a theatre, and from that time forward been accustomed to the society of worldly, unprincipled men, who had found the handsome, graceful youth in many ways serviceable to them, he had gradually become morally corrupted until he was capable of doing any wickedness, short of vulgar crime (for Cecil's sensibilities were refined in their way), that promised to advance his material prospects.

Young as he was he had seen much of gaudy, meretricious life; so much in fact that he was already tiring of it. His indolent nature longed for repose. He was not one to become more and more enamored with false splendor. He had a dream of retirement to some quiet love-spot, in the companionship of some sweet and gentle being whom he would call wife.

He possessed means to enable him to gratify this desire. Cecil Parnell was a young man of very considerable means, and the reflection that much of his money had been obtained by daring and skilful forgery did not disturb him in the least. His moral nature was dead; only his heart was yet alive.

When he in pursuance of a nefarious design chanced to discover the pure and gentle Jessie Dale, he regarded the event as a portion of that mysterious "luck" or providence—he associated the terms thus carelessly—that had always been so good to him. He accepted it as his fortunate fate.

To win the heart of Jessie Dale was now the great, new, final purpose of his life. He felt that with her to love him, to care for him, to caress him, to hover around him with gentle delight, would be all that he could ask for, apart from what he already possessed. And it is not to be doubted that this strange dreamer would be happy, for a time at least, if he could bring his selfish dream to pass.

Therefore when Stowell Dale, in his generous, kindly heart—putting down some obtruding suspicions of the young man's thorough honesty—invited him to his home, the wily Cecil felt that he had triumphed.

One thought gave him uneasiness—had the millionaire's son obtained a place in Jessie's affections? Had the cunning note failed to achieve its object?

He would soon know.

One evening he rang the bell at Jessie's home. He was by agreement to pass an hour with her father before the latter left to attend to his night duties.

Mr Dale himself admitted his visitor, and conducted him, not to the parlor, but to the sitting-room.

"We shall not be disturbed here by possible callers," said Mr. Dale. "We can have a cosey chat all by ourselves."

Cecil mentally wondered if the parlor was to be reserved for the use of Jessie and Harry Lester. A jealous twinge was aroused by this thought.

He next was anxious to know if he would on the present occasion meet this little human sunbeam—his chosen sweetheart, who was not yet aware that she had been so favored.

Ah, yes; here she came!

Tripping in with a mingled maiden and childish grace, shy yet curious, came Jessie Dale.

"Here, my pet," said her father; "let me acquaint you with my young friend, Mr. Dorrance. My daughter, Mr. Dorrance."

The false, handsome Wilmer Dorrance bowed gracefully, and looked very happy to meet Miss Dale (again).

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Dorrance," said Jessie, sweetly. "Father has informed me of the great service you did for him and others, a few nights since. Oh, if you had not overheard the plot, and the villains had succeeded in their wicked work, and the train had gone down!"

Jessie shuddered as the thought of what might have been rose freshly in her mind.

"It would have been terrible indeed," said Cecil, as if shocked to recall the dreadful possibility. "I rejoice that I was enabled to avert the disaster."

"I wish I could persuade my father to give up that tiresome railroad service," said Jessie. "I am sure he has done enough of it."

"How many years have you been employed in that way, Mr. Dale?" inquired the young man, turning from Jessie to her father.

And while he answered and made some remarks in connection with the subject, Jessie stole a closer glance at their visitor.

"I am sure I have seen him before," she said to herself. "Father's impression was the same; I wonder if we have all met him. But he has a striking face, such as once seen might linger in one's memory a long while. How handsome he is! But—but not in such a pleasing way as Harry is."

Cecil Parnell felt that Jessie's eyes were upon him. He turned suddenly to catch their expression.

"Ah," he thought, "she is wondering where she has seen me before."

"I do not fancy being taken up in that way," was her mental remark, as, making an excuse, she withdrew. "But perhaps I was rude. I wonder what aunty will think of Mr. Dorrance?"

Descending to the kitchen, Jessie found her aunt there, engaged in some domestic duty.

"Aunty, young Dorrance is up-stairs with father," she said; "the one who saved the train from disaster that night."

"Well, I'm sure, child, it is very well for him to be there if he lives so near and chooses to come; but it seems to me that a great many strangers have found our house under peculiar circumstances of late."

"Not a great many, aunty; only three. And you don't wish poor Mrs. Rowland had never come, do you?"

"Oh, no; only I am worried thinking about her all the time, and since we can't help her, I would just as lieve that somebody else had met with her, and not you."

"That is about the same as wishing she had never come, isn't it, aunty?" said Jessie in gentle reproach. "But there is Harry—"

"*Harry*, child! you don't call him *that*, do you?"

"He said I must; everybody does."

"What does he come here for, Jessie?"

"To learn what kind of tea is best for a cold, aunty," said Jessie, slyly.

"You are always making fun of my doctoring notions," returned Aunt Mary, rather severely; "but I am sure if I *hadn't* been so careful with you, you would have gone from us long ago."

"Gone where, aunty?"

"You naughty girl, Jessie! You know well enough what I mean. Will you please hand me that cup?"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Jessie, dolefully; "now you are mixing me another mess. I won't take it, aunty; you needn't make it."

"But I thought you looked unwell this afternoon, my child. Doesn't your head ache?"

"Not a bit, aunty."

"I was sure from your appearance that it did. But you are beginning with a cold at least."

"No, no, aunty," protested Jessie. "I haven't got well of my old one yet."

"There, Jessie!" exclaimed her aunt, in a tone of reproach and solicitude; "you just now said you were not feeling unwell, when I was certain that something ailed you; you *must* take the tea."

"It's the tea that *gives* me the cold, aunty," pursued her niece, in the demurest style of argument. "Don't you understand? I take such quantities that my poor little body thinks it all a waste to have so much expended on it, and so takes cold just to show its gratitude." And Jessie's handkerchief covered a roguish little smile.

"There goes the door-bell!" cried Aunt Mary.

"And Harry has come," whispered Jessie to herself.

"Shall I answer it?" asked her aunt.

"If you please," said Jessie, knowing who was there.

Harry Lester—for it was he, though the hour was so early—was admitted, and just as he entered, Mr. Dale and Cecil Parnell descended from the sitting-room. They met in the hall, Mr. Dale greeting Harry cordially, but hardly knowing whether to introduce the young men just there or not. He had not time to enter the parlor, and Cecil had also declared that he must go. Perhaps it was hardly worth while to make them acquainted on this brief occasion. Harry Lester glanced keenly at the handsome youth who had descended the stairway with Mr. Dale—so keenly that the false Wilmer Dorrance was alarmed, saying apprehensively to himself—"Heavens! will he recognize me on the spot?"

He took his hat hastily, and Mr. Dale excusing himself to Harry, without having introduced his young companion, went out with Cecil.

The latter had kept his face turned from Harry Lester as much as possible, not only to prevent too close a scrutiny of his features, but to conceal the look of jealous hate, which he felt was there expressed.

In the street he and Mr. Dale parted, the latter inviting him to call again.

They separated in the street, Mr. Dale going directly to the depot, Cecil walking around a square and then returning to the front of the house he had left.

The shutters of the parlor windows were not yet closely bowed. The curtains were drawn, but he could peer in, which he did, to discover, not by direct vision, but by shadowy picturing, two youthful figures sitting in the mellow glow of the chandelier. They were Jessie and his rival, he well knew. There was a low musical murmur of voices, varied now and then by a girlish laugh.

What a sweet picture of lovers' felicity he knew the room presented! His love, if it needed strengthening, was strengthened from that moment. A bad, bitter, blind feeling of jealousy—that unhappy evidence of love—rose in his breast against the successful wooer within, who knew not yet that he had a rival.

Cecil Parnell felt that a heaven was near, from which he was forever to be shut out. Within was a realized dream—his own sweet dream in tender perfection—yet its bliss was not for him. He felt lonely, sad and forsaken.

"Why should this young Lester," he said to himself, bitterly, "who has all the good things that life can give, step in to bulk me now? Why need he come to this quiet home nook, when the doors of pleasure are wide open to him everywhere? My plan to rid myself of his rivalry has failed, I see; or else love triumphs over pride; or else for once pride has taken its proper place in the train of love. But I will baffle him yet. I—"

His bitter, threatening musings were suddenly cut short.

A sharp pistol-shot sounded from the opposite side of the street, and the glass above his head was shivered by a bullet.

A quick, startled cry was heard within.

"What means this?" ejaculated Cecil Parnell, as he glided softly away, not wishing it, above all things, to be supposed that he had fired the shot.

He hurried down the street, fearing he might be arrested for the act, for he reflected that he might have been seen attempting to gaze into the window.

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 13.)

THE WHITE LADY;

OR,

The Brierton Mystery.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CROSS PURPOSES.

The first person Major Chester met in the village street of Dixreuil was Squire de Lacy.

The latter started perceptibly on finding himself face to face with the young officer, but soon rallied, and said, with his blandest air and most courteous smile, "This is, indeed, a pleasant surprise! What could have brought you here?"

"Curiosity," was the laconic reply.

Mr. de Lacy lifted his eyebrows wonderingly.

"Fancy curiosity bringing you all these miles from home! Is the game worth the candle, do you think?"

"I am not in a position to answer that question at present," returned the major.

"Which is clear proof, to my mind, that it is not."

"I don't understand your reasoning, I must own."

"Well, we must needs have a strong motive to excuse our conduct when it is exceptional, and as you are unable to explain your motive, it shows you have no excuse."

"I am not aware that I require an excuse."

"You will pardon me," said Mr. de Lacy, with dignity, "if I venture to contradict you. If you had met me under circumstances that showed a very evident intention of spying into your movements, and tracking your steps, I fancy you would have felt inclined to ask for an explanation, and, maybe, for an apology."

His manner was the perfection of dignified reproach and pained sensitiveness, and it had its effect on Major Chester so far that he was glad to be able to say, "Your daughter told me the evening you left that you had gone to town."

"And if I altered my plans, and preferred a somewhat longer trip."

"You were perfectly justified, of course; but you could hardly expect me to know of the change."

"And yet it is difficult to account for your presence here?"

"Is it impossible, then, that we should both of us be attracted to the spot by the renown of the White Lady?"

"An absurd fiction of that kind would not have attracted me."

"I admitted just now that I was curious, if you remember; and I am ready to confess further that I have a great desire to to investigate the phenomenon of which my friend speaks so confidently. But I hold that it is a trick, instead of a fiction."

"And I hold that it is nothing at all!" answered the old Squire, with almost stern decision.

"You see, I am bound to believe my friend's word, that there was something—whatever this something may have been."

"You are giving to a mere delusion the importance of a fact."

"I have known Paul Vane a good many years, and have been apt to consider him much too practical and unimaginative to be the victim of a 'mere delusion.'"

"But he has had troubles of late, and they have unhinged him a little, and rendered him more liable to such impressions as these. He does not give me the idea of being so very unimaginative as you describe."

"At any rate, he is too sensible to be taken in so completely as he must have been in this instance, supposing there were no possible foundation for the story he tells."

"There is no limit to human credulity, Major Chester."

"That is true; but in investigating a story, you also investigate the character of its author; and if you find that satisfactory, you are the more inclined to credit his assertions. As I had the honor of informing you just now, I have known Captain Vane for a great many years, and during the whole of that time he has been distinguished in my mind for his strict truthfulness and integrity."

"I did not impugn either his veracity or his character, Major Chester."

"Pardon me; if he saw nothing at all that night, and fabricated the White Lady, on purpose to make an effective tale, both are assuredly at fault."

"I did not mean that. I have too much regard for your friend myself to accuse him of anything of the kind."

"Then the White Lady is not a myth?" Major Chester urged.

"But she is a fiction."

"Which is a distinction without a difference, Mr. de Lacy, surely?"

"Nevertheless, it saved repetition. And now may I venture to ask where you mean to begin your investigations?"

"At the old chateau."

"I believe part of it is a private residence."

"That is just what my friend told me. He even had a conversation with the old woman who lived there; but although he fancied he saw proofs that she was not the sole occupant of the place, she distinctly denied having any companion. As he was not able to contradict her, he had to take his leave."

"Are you better informed, then?"

There was so much suppressed eagerness in the old Squire's question, that Major Chester looked at him keenly and searchingly as he said, "I hope soon to be able to answer in the affirmative."

"I don't know by what right you could claim to search the house."

"I'll try the *suaviter in modo* first of all, and if that doesn't succeed, I'll try the *fortiter in re*."

"How?"

"I shall simply go to the prefect, state what I know, and tell him that it is in the interest of the whole community that the deception should be unmasked, and that, fortified by his authority and two *gendarmes*, I shall return to the charge."

"I should hardly think there would be a prefect here, Dixreuil being so small and unimportant," Mr. de Lacy coolly observed.

"At any rate, there will be some person to whom one can apply. If the worst comes to the worst, I shall go to the curé of the parish."

"I see that you are a very determined foe."

"To everything like injustice, deception, or craft, I am."

"I presume that you have some special interest in the unravelment of this mystery, if mystery there be?" And if not quite so bland as usual, his manner was calm, attentive, and self-possessed.

"I am not prepared to answer that question."

Mr. de Lacy shrugged his shoulders as if it were a matter of indifference to him either way.

"I am afraid I shan't see the end of the adventure, anyhow, as I am returning home in a couple of hours. I shall have a good deal to tell my daughter, thanks to you."

"I shall be following to-morrow. You don't feel inclined to put off your journey, that we may travel together, Mr. de Lacy?"

"Thanks, no," he answered, coldly. "I am so rarely separated from Madeleine, that I find myself longing quite foolishly to get back."

"We shall meet again soon."

"Yes, we shall meet again soon," replied Mr. de Lacy, with slow emphasis, and a peculiar smile. "Oh, by the by"—turning back carelessly—"have you seen the English papers to-day?"

"Not yet."

"My poor niece's murderer has been discovered."

"Who is it, then?"

"Just as I dreaded and feared—my unhappy relative, William de Lacy."

"Do you honestly believe him to be guilty, Mr. de Lacy?"

"Major Chester," said the old Squire, casting down his eyes, "Heaven forbid that I should judge any man but myself! The question of his innocence or guilt lies between God and his own conscience; but there is one thing I can say, and that is, I devoutly trust he may get off."

"I can't say I have much sympathy with any man who could treacherously take the life of a fair young creature like Winifred de Lacy."

"We know nothing of his temptations," replied Mr. de Lacy, rather excitedly. "It is so easy to condemn, and so difficult to be merciful, it seems to me."

"As far as your relative is concerned, I should find it very easy to be merciful, as I do not believe for a moment that he is guilty."

"Then, pray, whom do you accuse?"

"I accuse none."

"I am glad to perceive that you agree with me so far," said Mr. de Lacy, mildly. "Neither do I accuse any living soul, trusting that when I die, the judgment I have meted to others may be meted to me."

He turned again then, and, lifting his hat courteously, walked away, leaving an impression on Major Chester's mind that, if not a saint, he was the best actor he had ever seen.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MAJOR CHESTER SURRENDERS AT DISCRETION.

As far as Major Chester's visit to Dixreuil was concerned, it proved unsatisfactory. It is true that he had verified his suspicions as regarded De Lacy; but, beyond this point, he could not flatter himself that he had advanced a single step, since he had no more idea whether the other's visit had been merely accidental, or the result of a deep purpose known only to himself.

When he presented himself at the chateau, old Manon received him very graciously, and even appeared to anticipate his wishes by asking if he would like to look over the place.

"I know that you English folks are curious," she said; "and it matters nothing to me that you pry about my rooms. I have nothing to lose, and nothing to hide."

"Have you always been so unfortunate;" asked Major Chester, looking keenly into the shrewd old face, over whose brightness a great shadow had fallen of late.

Old Manon shook her head.

"I was fortunate for just one year—when I was young; but it is so long ago now I forget all about it."

"May I offer you some money in return for the trouble you have taken?" he asked, presently, after having fully satisfied himself that there was no sign anywhere of other occupancy besides Manon's.

She put her hands resolutely behind her.

"I want for nothing, good sir; and I hope I can oblige in such a small favor without expecting payment. But thank you, all the same; I dare say you meant well."

"You look pale," Major Chester said, touched by the old woman's brave efforts to conceal her evident trouble; "is anything the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter that you would care to know, sir," replied Manon, firmly. "We all have our troubles, you know, gentle and simple, rich and poor."

"That is true; only that you are an old woman, and might look for a little peace now."

"There is no peace for the wicked, sir; but God is good!" answered old Manon; and there was a tear in her bright black eyes as she courtesied her adieux. "Good speed you, sir, and make you luckier than me."

Major Chester could not be accused of sentimentality by any means; and yet he was glad to recall the old Frenchwoman's words as he drew nearer hourly to Brierton and Madeleine.

"Well?" said Captain Vane, as his friend presented himself before him as unceremoniously as he had disappeared. "I begin to think you must live in a town if you want to be quiet. This is the most eventful place I ever visited in my life. Talk about the dissipations of Paris, indeed!"

"What has happened now, then?"

"I am surprised that *you* condescend to ask the question."

"I am not good at riddles, Paul, as you know."

"And yet you are an enigma yourself—to me."

"Why?"

"What on earth made you leave Brierton so suddenly?"

"Because I wanted to satisfy myself upon a certain point."

"Well?" urged Captain Vane, curiously.

"The old Squire was there. He was almost the first person I met at Dixreuil."

"What an extraordinary coincidence."

"I am not sure that it was a coincidence; but we'll talk about that another time. What has happened in Brierton since I went away?"

"Your sudden journey was one of the incidents to which I alluded. Then, again, Mr. de Lacy's movements are no less erratic and abrupt. He departs, without warning, one day; returns unexpectedly on the fourth; and in less than an hour, he and his daughter have left together, without any one having the least idea where they are gone, or when they will return."

"I can tell you when they will return, at any rate," Major Chester said, hiding his disappointment with effort.

"He told you, then?"

"No; but I can guess. The day after I leave Brierton, he will come back."

"What makes you think that?"

"You would be terribly scandalized if I were to explain the grounds I have for this belief."

"I see it is the old story, Chester."

"But a new chapter. I warned you it was 'to be continued.'"

"I am astonished that a man, naturally so generous and large-minded, should encourage such a prejudice as you have taken against the old Squire."

"The odd part of it is, that instead of encouraging it, I am fighting daily against it, Paul," answered Major Chester, seriously. "You don't know what an interest I have in proving myself in the wrong; or how thankful I should be if I could only trust Mr. de Lacy for more than ten minutes at a time."

"Every one else trusts him."

"I know they do; and why can't I? Answer me that question satisfactorily, and I will thank you with all my heart."

"Perhaps you cling too obstinately to the theory you set up at starting?"

"No, I don't; I am ready to be convinced at any moment that conviction will come. What is more, I cannot conceal from myself, or from you, that my feelings are becoming daily more and more involved in the question, and that soon I shall dread discovery rather than court it."

"You speak in riddles, Chester."

"Have you no eyes, then?"

"So you mean that you are beginning to care for Madeleine?"

"I am afraid so."

"It would be a judgment on you, if it were so," answered Captain Vane, decidedly. "You have systematically maligned one of the best men that ever breathed, and if Madeleine were to avenge her father's wrongs, you could hardly complain."

"I should not complain; I should suffer;" answered Major Chester, so feelingly, that Captain Vane was touched, and held out his hand.

"Forgive me, old friend, if I have spoken harshly," he said; "but I have felt your injustice to Mr. de Lacy all along as almost an injury to myself. I know, if you do not, how utterly incapable he is of a mistake, even far more of a crime, and I am always reproaching myself for not having been able to convince you of this, as if it were a sin that would lay heavily at my door."

"Then you are cruelly unjust to yourself," Major Chester said, "for I am ready to swear that you have done your best."

Before he could add another word, Mrs. Merridew's servant came in with a letter, which she handed to Captain Vane.

"Will wonders never cease?" the young officer exclaimed, as he tore it open, and perused it hastily; "it is an invitation from Mr. de Lacy to dine with him to-night."

"For me?"

"For us both."

"Then he has returned?"

"So it seems. There is a gracious message for you, praying that you will excuse the informality of including both invitations in one note, and look rather at the intention than the fact. No doubt the man is waiting for an answer. What am I to say?"

There was a struggle in Major Chester's heart—all the sharper, perhaps, that it was so short; and then he answered, in his usual tone, "Let us go, by all means! I am afraid I have not the courage to say no."

There was no trace of resentment or significance in Mr. de Lacy's manner that evening, as he welcomed either guest with equal cordiality, saying, pleasantly, but carelessly, to Major Chester, "You ought to have a great deal to tell us about the White Lady of Dixreuil. I hope you were well repaid for all the trouble you took."

"Papa," said Madeleine, warningly, "you know that is a forbidden subject."

"Not now, my love," he answered, with his beaming smile. "I have taken care to prove that even the legend itself has no foundation in fact, and all the rest is mere illusion or delusion, which you will. The consequence is, that I would as soon discuss that question as any other, always supposing that it is agreeable to our guests."

Captain Vane glanced toward Major Chester, and if a man in this world looked penitent and ashamed, it was his friend.

But there was joy even in his abasement: for now he might think of Madeleine—now he might begin to build up his future in the hope of one day calling her his wife.

She had never looked half so lovely before, he thought, as she looked this night.

Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes full of expression, her lips bright with incessant smiles, showing the white line of her pearly teeth.

She talked and laughed gayly enough, but there was a certain consciousness in her manner, specially sweet to Major Chester, who fancied that it augured success to his cause.

She would look full at Captain Vane when she spoke, but if she answered a question of his it was with drooping eyelids, and heightening color, and a tender little petulance about the sweet, red mouth.

He had never loved till now, and was intoxicated with the wonders of delight that opened out before him. He tried to be reasonable and discreet—but he could not help his glance from wandering to Madeleine, and dwelling there rapturously. It was wonderful to have the feeling of loving and the hope of being beloved.

The old Squire was in one of his airiest and most fanciful moods, and must needs go out and see the stars, he said. A moonlight walk, when the roses and honeysuckle were in bloom, and the hop-gardens were filling the air with divinest fragrance, was worth even the risk of rheumatism. Only Madeleine was not strong; he should advise her to stay in.

But Madeleine declared she would do nothing of the kind.

"But I can fetch a shawl," she said, gayly, "if some one will wait."

And the some one who waited was Major Chester, of course.

When she came down presently, she pretended to be immensely surprised that he should have stayed behind for her; but even the very best of women are a little deceitful at times, for she had certainly reckoned on finding him there.

"Did they tell you where they were going?" she inquired, with the most innocent air in the world.

"I never asked."

"But you should," she said, looking dreadfully disappointed. "I am afraid we shall miss them, you know."

"In that case, I will promise not to make myself more disagreeable than I can possibly help."

"Oh, Major Chester, you know I didn't mean that!"

It was very mean of him, I must own, to take advantage of her in any way; but he certainly did.

"I shan't believe you didn't mean it unless you take my arm."

Madeleine let her tremulous fingers fall lightly on his strong wrist, saying, in a timid undertone—

"Is it true, Major Chester, that you went to France to see some one you liked very much?"

"Who told you that?"

"No one told me so exactly—but papa seemed to think it was probable."

"And didn't your own heart contradict him, Madeleine?"

He had never called her Madeleine before, and his voice was very low and tender. The girl began to wonder, tremble, and thrill.

He had gone away angry with her, she believed; but he was not angry now, assuredly, for no angry man ever looked like that.

She hazarded a shy glance upward, and let it fall again in great confusion. She was hardly prepared, even yet, for the wealth of garnered love that Major Chester was ready to bestow upon her.

He did not speak just yet, because it was no pleasant to note her blushes, her anxious efforts at self-control. If Madeleine had been a coquette, he might have doubted these signs; but he knew that he could trust her, and was not afraid.

It was not until they reached the end of the path, that he took the little hand that rested so confidingly on his arm, and said, "Madeleine, I want this, and you."

Madeleine had no voice to answer him, but she did not take her hand away.

"Well, love?" he said, after awhile; and he lifted the round chin, and looked deep, down into the true, earnest eyes. "I am waiting for a word of hope."

"I do not belong to myself," Madeleine faltered. "But if papa will give me to you—"

Here she broke down, and hid her face on his shoulder.

"You won't say 'No?'" he urged.

"I'll say just what he tells me."

"But, Madeleine, you don't wish me to infer that you have no feeling yourself in the matter? Because, though I want you so very, very much, darling, I would not have an unwilling wife. If you do not love me, it would be cruel kindness to deceive me, and let me give you my whole heart in return for smiling tolerance. No man with right feeling would take you on such terms. Try and tell me the truth, Madeleine. Do you love me, dear?"

Madeleine's reply was a mere whisper; but he heard it plainly enough, no doubt, for he drew her to his heart with a passionate strain, and lifted her face again, this time that he might reach her lips.

"Oh, Madeleine! my sweet love, you have made me very happy this day. I think I can promise that you will never regret your choice. I have never cared for any woman before, so that you will have no rival in the past, or equal in the present. All those years I seem to have been waiting for you, and now that you are found, nothing shall part us again."

It must have been an instinct of divination that caused Madeleine to say, "But, Major Chester, if papa should object?"

"But, in the meantime, I may as well be called by my proper name."

"I thought that was your proper name," she answered, innocently.

"Not at all. My proper name is Ronald—to *you*."

"Have you thought, Ronald"—very shyly and softly, this last word—"that papa might possibly object?"

"On what grounds?"

"I don't know."

"Nor do I. I can satisfy him that my name is honorable, and my fortune sufficient."

"Papa wouldn't think about the last, I am sure," Madeleine said, with a very bright blush.

"Then where do you think he could find objection to our marriage, dear? I have far too much respect for you, Madeleine, to ask for your love without deserving it. I hope you are convinced of that."

"You need not even tell me so. I am satisfied without."

"My loyal, true Madeleine!" he exclaimed rapturously; "if I were to lose you, it would break my heart!" And he held her closer still, overshadowing her with his grand height, as completely as if she were hidden away in his arms, and he never meant that any one should find her again.

And he would have thankfully had it so, if he had known that she had soon to be taken from him, leaving him no comfort but the sense of her faithfulness and truth.

But, happily for them, their brief hour of bliss was not spoilt by any evil presentiments.

Madeleine scarcely believed in her own doubt when she uttered it, and was quite ready to allow herself to be persuaded that any opposition from her father to their union was altogether out of the question.

"There's nothing he could say," Major Chester added, confidently. "It would have been different if you had not loved me. But you do love me, Madeleine?"

"You know that I do."

"Give me my name—just to see if you have learnt your lesson properly."

"Ronald," she said, timidly.

"That won't do. It ought to be 'Ronald, dear,' all things considered; that is to say, if you are sure you love me."

"It is too bad of you to tease me, Ronald, dear."

"I'll never do it again now," he said, kissing her tenderly. "I believe you are the most obedient darling in all the world."

"It is so easy to obey where one loves," Madeleine said, with deep emotion.

And then they heard voices approaching, and Madeleine sprang out of his arms trembling and blushing.

"Don't speak to papa to-night," she whispered, agitatedly. "He won't say no, of course; but if he should, let me be happy just this one night."

"As you like, dear. May I come to-morrow morning?" Madeleine nodded her head, and began to talk about her roses, and twenty other things, in a wild, strange jumble, that would have betrayed her to Mr. de Lacy if he had not apparently been so occupied with Captain Vane.

Neither his daughter nor Major Chester could have told why their hearts sank as they caught this fragment of his conversation, spoken in rather a loud voice, although ostensibly addressed to the young officer at his side; "I do not care for my dear child's husband to be rich, or to bear a great name: I only require that he should be high-minded, sympathetic, and unprejudiced; so that when Madeleine marries, I may not lose a daughter, but find a son. Any one who might divide us two, or destroy her faith in me, would ask in vain, if he were a king's son, and would give me a million for every thousand I can settle on her. Oh, there you are, my love!" he added, abruptly, as he came upon Madeleine and her companion; "I hope you are well wrapped up."

But though his air of surprise was remarkably well-feigned, Major Chester could not help thinking that he had seen them earlier than he wished them to suppose, and had aimed this arrow direct at his heart.

CHAPTER XXX.

WILD WILL REFUSES LEGAL AID.

Wild Will, who had been such a trifler in the sunshine, developed a new dignity in adversity—a dignity that astonished his gaolers, and impressed his counsel so favorably, that he was soon not only his advocate, but his ally.

When he was told kindly and feelingly of his wife's death, for one minute he buried his face in his hands, as if completely overwhelmed.

Then he lifted it again, and said, quite calmly, "She was such a tender little soul our world was too cruel for her. She would have died of shame and sorrow both, if she hadn't died of sorrow alone; so that I dare say it is as well as it is. Don't the parsons say that the Almighty knows best?"

And that was all the remark he made; but you might almost have said that he was relieved. He knew that if poor little Dolly had been given her choice, she would not have elected to live as things had turned out; and that as her heart must needs break, he could afford to be thankful that the worst of the pain was over.

It did not seem to trouble him more that she had believed him untrue.

"Because," as he said within himself, "it was only for a little while, and she knows better now."

When his advocate, sitting alone with him in his cell, leaned forward, looked him searchingly right in the eyes, and said, "Mr. de Lacy, you plead 'Not guilty,' of course, and nothing will now alter the line of defence I have marked out for myself; at the same time, I want to know if this is the actual truth—you understand?"

"No," Wild Will answered, steadily; "I am not sure that I do understand. You see, I ain't accustomed to lawyers, and they confuse my head."

"Very well; I'll put my question more plainly. Is your plea absolutely and entirely true?"

Wild Will stared at him with a kind of horror.

"Why, you don't mean to say you'd undertake my defence if you had the least doubt of my innocence, do you?"

"Being guilty according to conscience, and guilty according to law, are two different things; and the law is my trade, you know."

"Then it is a confoundedly dishonest trade, that is all!" said Wild Will, hotly; "and if they hang me twice over, I'll have nothing to do with it!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I won't be defended, if it's such a humbug as all that. I thought you were taking my part because I was ill-used."

The lawyer shook his head.

"I am sorry to say I cannot afford to be so disinterested."

"Then that settles the question without any more trouble, because I don't happen to have more than a few pounds in the world. And if I were ever so rich, I'd never pay a man for defending me against his own conscience. I dare say you think it's queer for me to talk like this, and put it down to affectation, but I don't believe I did any harm in the world, except to spend money I hadn't got. There was poor little Dolly, to be sure,"—and he stopped to sigh—"but I loved her very dearly, though I was a poor, careless fellow to have such a treasure to guard; and if she didn't mind putting up with things for the sake of our being together, I don't see that any one had a right to interfere."

"But I understand that your wife's father is very inveterate against you, nevertheless."

"He's an old man, and he forgets what it is to be mad in love, and have every one against you. Knowing all I know now, I'd do just the same to-morrow, if I had my time to come over again. Dolly and I were very happy what little time we had together, and it's something to look back upon with pleasure these dreary hours in prison."

"Only, you see, she might have been alive now if she hadn't consented to follow your fortunes."

"How do you know?" inquired Wild Will, sharply. "There's more ways than one of going out of the world. But we mustn't talk about her;" and his lips were convulsed by a sharp spasm of pain. "It would be a good thing for both of us if we were as well off as she."

Mr. Jenkins then referred to the subject of his defence; but, to his surprise, the prisoner held firm to his determination not to employ any one to plead his cause.

"I see every one thinks me guilty," he said; "and let it be so. All the palavering in the world won't save my life now. If I could escape, I would; but as there's no chance of that, I'll take the matter quietly, and let them do their worst."

"But you are destroying your one single chance of life by your obstinacy," the other urged.

"And what then? I shall be the only loser."

"You say that the coat from which a fragment was torn by poor Miss de Lacy never belonged to you at all?"

"No."

"Can't you account, then, for the way in which it came into your possession?"

"No, I can't; and, what's more, I don't mean to try."

"But you are just throwing your life away," reiterated Mr. Jenkins.

"It's no use fighting against facts. There's Mrs. Collison to prove that I gave it to her, with some more of my things; and then there's Captain Vane to prove that the piece torn out of it was stolen whilst I was staying at Brierton, and that I departed suddenly afterward, without leaving my address behind; and who, do you suppose, would believe, after all this, that I never had a coat like that in my life? Indeed, I've no doubt that my tailor will come forward and swear that he made it for me, and that, as as a matter of course, I owe him for it still. I am learning not to be surprised at anything now-a-days. According to your own showing, the case is just as ugly as can be."

"That's no reason why you shouldn't try and get off."

"But not your way, or by your means, thank you," said Wild Will, so determinedly that Mr. Jenkins felt it would be wasting words to say any more.

He could not help regretting the young man's folly; but there was nothing to be done, so he rose, and took his leave.

The trial came on in a few days, and the astonishment of the court was very great to find the prisoner undefended. He was offered help, but quietly declined, for the same reason that he had rejected Mr. Jenkins's valuable services.

When the usual question was put to him by the judge—whether he was guilty or not guilty, he answered gravely, but firmly, "Not guilty, my lord."

Captain Vane was one of the witnesses for the crown, and perhaps he had pity for the wretched man who stood in the very same position now from which he had so recently escaped; for though he had once been so inveterate against him, he spoke gently enough, and with an evident desire to give the prisoner the benefit of any doubt.

But when questioned about the coat, he could only say that he firmly believed it to be that which poor Winifred had caught at in a last despairing effort to escape. The fragment which he had found on the river-bank, and preserved so carefully, having been stolen from him, he was unable to compare the two; but he could have no doubt whatever on the subject in his own mind. Still, in law, conjectures are not evidence, and Captain Vane's scrupulosity was one point scored in the prisoner's favor, for no one who had not the strictest notions of rectitude and truth would have hesitated to swear that they were actually the same; but the young officer's feelings had changed so much that he was thankful to feel, as he stepped out of the witness-box, that he had not done Wild Will as much harm as he might.

It did not seem possible that he was innocent. But that wild thirst for revenge which Captain Vane had felt at first was gradually softening, and now he began to understand that the evil spirit he had been encouraging was drawing him farther and farther from Winifred in Heaven.

And then an indescribable something in Wild Will's manner had touched him. He had expected him to bluster, and swagger, and protest his innocence; instead of that, he stood calmly and bravely in the dock, without the faintest sign of fear or conscious guilt, and in his very composure there was a certain dignity, wonderfully well acted for such a reckless fellow as poor Will.

Mr. de Lacy, the old Squire, succeeded Captain Vane; and his benevolent face and flowing white locks made a visible impression.

He frankly confessed to having warned the prisoner of the charge Captain Vane was seeking to substantiate, and counselled flight, and owned that he had been in the wrong; but it was better to err on the side of mercy, according to his humble opinion, even if you did come into collision with the law—which sentiment was greatly applauded in court.

Still, in spite of the reckless life his unfortunate relative had led, Mr. de Lacy said he felt sure he could never have been guilty of the crime imputed to him. He asserted this three or four times, at least; and yet, somehow, in spite of his kindly disposition, he did Wild Will more harm than any of his enemies, whilst fully impressing the whole court with the conviction that he would almost have sacrificed his life to secure the prisoner's acquittal.

Dolly's father was next called.

For the first time, Wild Will began to tremble. Terrible in his wrath, in his fierce denunciations against the murderer of his child, his animus was still so evident that the prisoner might have escaped even yet if the old Squire had not been such a warm friend.

Unfortunately, he could not prove where he had been on the day of poor Winifred's death. Mrs. Collison was brought forward to show that he left town that very morning, and did not return for several days; and as Wild Will had had a special reason for keeping out of sight during this interval, he had naturally taken every precaution to secure secrecy. Dolly, had she been living, could have told of a stolen hour passed with him under the whispering elms, just as the stars were coming out, and of their listening together to the church clock striking nine; and as Brierton and London were fifty miles apart, this would have demonstrated how impossible it was that he could have been Winifred's destroyer. But Dolly was dead, and not a living soul who knew him had seen him that day when he had been purposely hiding from sight.

Outwardly he was very calm when the jury retired to consider their verdict; but when they reappeared, in the course of about twenty minutes, and declared that they found the prisoner "Guilty," he paled ever so little, and steadied himself against the dock.

But when the judge asked if he knew any reason why the sentence of the law should not be passed upon him, the prisoner said, with a vague, transient smile, "I am not guilty, my lord," and appeared to watch with curious interest whilst he put on the black cap, and proceeded to pass sentence solemnly and with deep emotion.

"To be hanged by the neck until he was dead."

This brought the terrible reality closely home to the unfortunate man, and he was seen to shiver slightly, but soon recovered himself, and looked the least concerned of all in the crowded court.

When the judge pronounced his broken "Amen," Wild Will bowed, and allowed himself to be led away without even a sign that betrayed his inward feeling.

But when he caught sight of Dolly's father leaning forward, haggard and exultant, and trying to attract his attention, his face changed again, and he was heard to mutter, "This is too much."

Once more he labored to control himself, and passed out of sight with a calm, resigned face, that made some wonder—and, amongst them, Captain Vane—whether, in spite of the evidence against him, he might not be an innocent man, after all.

Back again in his prison, out of reach of those terrible eyes, Wild Will felt better again. He must die one day, he reflected, and as well this way as any other, only there was the shame. And then to perish violently, in his full strength—to see the grinning, curious crowd eying him to the end—to take his last look at the pleasant world he had loved too well, over a sea of cruel, unpitying faces, and to have his short pain sharpened by the sense that every one believed him guilty—surely that was hard!

And then he argued that all the charm of life had left him with Dolly; knowing that he would have chosen to live still, if he might. These conflicting emotions tore at his very heart, until every fibre seemed to ache with the strain. At last, he fell on his knees, buried his face in his hard pallet-bed, and cried out in his despair, "Dolly, if you know, and can—save me!"

It seemed to him, then, that he felt something descend softly, and nestle against him, whilst a deep peace fell upon him—a peace that could only come from Dolly in the Heaven she had won.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TO BE, OR NOT TO BE?

In spite of the warning he had received, Major Chester presented himself next morning at The Hermitage, and asked to see the old Squire alone. He was ushered into the library, where Mr. de Lacy was writing some letters; but as soon as he caught sight of his visitor, he courteously rose, and offered him a chair with his own hand.

"A delightful morning," he said, beamingly. "Madeleine and I were agreeing that but for the darkening foliage we might have believed that summer was beginning instead of ending. However, the autumn is very pleasant, if only it did not mean that winter was so near."

"But I like winter, too, in its turn," Major Chester replied, for the sake of saying something.

"That is natural; you are young, I am old, and regret to see the summer glory decay, lest it may be the last I shall ever witness. Not that I should be sorry to die," he added, with the sudden gray, withered look in his face, Major Chester had noticed once before; "only that I dread the thought of leaving my poor little Madeleine alone in the world."

Kind as this speech sounded, Major Chester, remembering it afterward, thought it the very cruellest he had ever heard.

If designed to afford him an opening, it had the desired effect; for it was natural that he should say, "I came to speak to you on that very subject."

"On the subject of Madeleine?" said Mr. de Lacy, inquiringly; and he crossed his arms, and looked calmly at his visitor.

"Yes."

"I am sure you are very kind."

Was he speaking ironically? Major Chester might have fancied so, only that he looked so smilingly benevolent, so exquisitely urbane, so totally incapable of hurting even a fly.

He had to make a strong effort, however, before he could go on.

"You may, perhaps, have noticed my growing affection for your daughter, Mr. de Lacy."

"It is always a matter of course that people should learn to like Madeleine as they learn to know her."

"But mine is far beyond liking, sir."

"I am glad to hear it, Major Chester—very glad indeed," he answered, cheerily. "The praise of a man who has travelled so much as you have is worth having."

"I hope that my love is equally valuable in your eyes?"

"Well, really, isn't that rather a strong way of putting it?"

"I could put it twenty times stronger, and still fall short of the truth."

"I see you are naturally enthusiastic, Major Chester."

"You are mistaken there—I am naturally phlegmatic; but if my heart is not easily touched, when once an impression is made, it abides for ever."

"Now, you will excuse me, I am sure," said Mr. de Lacy, suavely; "but I pride myself upon being a good judge of character, and I should judge you very differently to what you judge yourself. For instance, I should have pronounced you susceptible and impressionable to the last degree."

"That is not what my friends say of me, I fancy."

"Of course, I do not aspire yet to the honor of ranking among them," said the old Squire, affably; "but, perhaps, I am a more impartial witness on this account."

"I don't think you can be expected to understand me so well as those who have known me for years."

"Still, my penetration is not often at fault."

"Nor mine," Major Chester answered, almost involuntarily.

Mr. de Lacy looked at him calmly and searchingly, and simply said, "Indeed!"

Feeling that he had made a false step, Major Chester hastened to add, "It is because of this I have learnt to love and admire your daughter so much, that I feel she is the only woman I could ever desire for my wife."

"For your wife?"

The old Squire repeated the words softly and incredulously.

"Madeleine your wife? Oh, no, no!" and he shuddered convulsively. "Dearly as I love her, I would rather see her in her grave!"

"Why?"

"That is a difficult question to answer, because I have so many reasons for the assertion. One is, that I have other plans for my child's future: another, that she would be as much parted from me, being your wife, as if she were in her grave; another—but as I cannot give all my reasons, I may as well stop here. It suffices to say that I distinctly and emphatically decline for Madeleine the honor you designed her."

"Is she not to be consulted, then, in a question so vital to her interests?"

"Madeleine and I think alike on all subjects, Major Chester; therefore, if I refuse, she refuses, as a matter of course."

"But she has already accepted me."

"Conditionally."

Major Chester was forced to admit that.

"At the same time," he continued, "she was so good as to confess, to my great joy, that she liked me sufficiently to make your consent necessary to her happiness."

"That was just like Madeleine," responded her father, touched, but not conquered. "She is so gentle, that when she must needs wound with one hand, she caresses with the other."

"I think you mistake the case altogether."

"Not at all," interrupted the old Squire, hastily. "I am sure that Madeleine was sensible from the first that such a marriage was well-nigh impossible, but she would naturally spare your feelings if she could. Besides, it was better that the denial should come from me, in any case, as it would have more authority, and save the pain of any repetition."

"I am positive that Madeleine had no thought of the kind."

"You must allow me to be the best judge of my daughter's motives and feelings. You see, I have studied her affectionately and closely ever since she was a mere babe, and cannot help understanding her now. She has only one fault—and that 'leans to virtue's side'—she has not sufficient moral courage to say 'No.'"

"Is it so very impossible, then, that she should wish to say, 'Yes?'"

"Yes; if I do not approve of the match."

"But she had no reason to suppose that you would not approve."

"Major Chester, it is out of the question that a man reared and constituted as you are, should understand the perfect communion that exists between Madeleine and myself on every point. We understand each other without speaking, and she more often obeys a glance than a word. This is why I dare confidently assert that Madeleine, if she accepted you, was purely influenced by a cowardly desire to save your feelings at the moment."

"Will you send for her, then, and question her before me? I promise you that if she confesses so much, I will never again trouble you with my pretensions."

The old Squire shook his head.

"I have not the heart to subject my dear child to such a painful ordeal."

"Why should it be painful?"

"I cannot convince you, Major Chester, that I understand her better than you do," he answered, firmly, but patiently. "I could not, for the world, force her into an explanation she has sought so earnestly to evade."

"I believe that she would not thank you for denying her a chance of asserting her own opinion in the matter."

The old Squire smiled superior.

"That shows how little, how very little you really know my dear child. She would thank any one who relieved her from an unpleasant duty."

"You do Madeleine far less than justice, sir."

"Heaven forbid!" he answered, fervently; "for even this one fault of hers is sweet to me as a proof of her tender heart."

"But it is much greater kindness, as I told her last night, to say no candidly at once, than to give me hopes that can never be realized. I should have summoned all my pride and fortitude to meet the blow, and I should have respected her all my life long for her wise firmness. Whereas now, if I am to be disappointed, it will be a more serious matter."

"Is it too late for resignation, then?"

"Yes," he answered, sternly, "by fourteen hours. It is scarcely that since your daughter accepted me, and allowed me to believe that I was not indifferent to her, and I have been lying awake all night the better to dream of my coming bliss."

"Then you can go to sleep all other nights, and forget."

"I am not like a foolish lad, Mr. de Lacy, who loves lightly, and recovers quickly. I have taken Madeleine's image into the very innermost recesses of my heart, and I cannot cast it forth again as long as I live. I would rather die than give her up."

"So all lovers say."

"They wouldn't be true lovers if they did not."

"But the question is, of course, how long it lasts."

"It ought to be possible to trust a man of my age, Mr. de Lacy."

"It is not possible to trust a man of any age," he answered, gravely; "my experience of life and human nature has taught me that and truth, amongst many others."

Major Chester began to lose his temper a little, in spite of himself. He desired, above all things, to bear with Madeleine's father; but it was provoking to be met at all points with these trivial objections, so evidently designed merely to put him off.

Professing to love Madeleine so dearly, why did he not send for her, and consult her wishes on a point that concerned her; and her only.

Besides, Mr. de Lacy had scarcely the right, Major Chester thought, to refuse a suitor, simply because he did not particularly affect him. There was some strong underlying motive for his conduct he could not fathom; but whatever it might be, Madeleine would respect it, her lover knew, even if she broke her heart.

Madeleine was so dutiful and conscientious, that her weakness, instead of helping him, would just kill her.

Feeling this, made him ready to sacrifice his pride, everything but his honor, to propitiate this man, whose smiling, treacherous calm he knew now to be the mask of an inexorable will.

He, therefore, forced himself to say, "I have no wish to part you and your daughter, Mr. de Lacy. If you would live with us, I am sure you would be satisfied of my good intentions, as regarded both yourself and her."

"I am too old to embark in any difficult enterprise," was the reply—all the more cruel perhaps, that his manner was so bland and courteous; "and, indeed, I greatly doubt if there ever was a time in my life when I was equal to the undertaking."

"I cannot see where the difficulty lies myself, sir," was the somewhat haughty response.

"Can't you, indeed? Should you like to live under the same roof, and come into hourly communication, with a man whom you disliked, and who suspected you?"

"Not if I were absolutely sure of the fact," was the reply.

"And my theory is," pursued Mr. de Lacy, quietly, "that you know, the moment you meet a person, whether he is antagonistic or sympathetic. I may be unusually sensitive, perhaps—no doubt I am—but I had not been in your company five minutes before I knew that we could never be friends."

"Nay, Mr. de Lacy," said the major; "there is one great bond between us—we both love Madeleine."

"Or, rather, say that I love her, and you think you love her."

"I am afraid, sir, it is an unquestionable fact."

"Then," pursued Mr. de Lacy, changing his tone to one that was stern and decided, "I advise you to get over it as quickly as you can. You told me just now that you would rather die than give Madeleine up, which was a mere lover-like exaggeration. I am no lover, and have no cause to exaggerate; you may, therefore, believe me, when I say that I would rather die than give Madeleine to you."

"And your reasons, Mr. de Lacy?" demanded the major.

"I have already given you a powerful one, it seems to me."

"But it is based on a misconstruction, sir. I do not dislike you. Those whom Madeleine loves and respects, I must needs like, for her dear sake."

"Well, then, since you force me to the confession, I do not like you!"

"But is that sufficient reason for your denying me, Mr. de Lacy? You love your daughter devotedly, you say; and, if this be so, her happiness should be dearer to you than your own."

"For this reason, Major Chester, I decline, once and for all, to entertain your proposition."

"But Madeleine loves me!" answered the other, desperately.

Mr. de Lacy smiled.

"Madeleine tells you so, you mean."

"And do you mean me to believe that your daughter is a liar, sir?"

"Hush! Pray don't use such strong language. Madeleine is truth itself, but she is ridiculously tender-hearted."

"That does not prevent her from knowing her own mind."

"Perhaps not; but it prevents her from speaking it."

Major Chester's face showed him terribly pained and overcome; the old Squire's expressed nothing but a smile.

"I beseech you," the young man cried, brokenly, "whatever happens, not to destroy my faith in Madeleine. She is the embodiment to me of everything that is pure and true, tender and noble, and it would be more merciful to kill me than to take from me this faith, which is the best part of my life. Send me away despairing, if you will, Mr. de Lacy, but let me believe, always, in this one love of my life."

The old Squire held out his hand, apparently touched.

"Madeleine is worthy of all devotion," he said, softly; "only you must understand, Major Chester, that she can never be your wife."

"Give me sufficient reason sir, and I will promise not to trouble you any more."

"It is sufficient that I say so."

"Pardon me if I demand an explanation."

"I regret, exceedingly, to be compelled to confine myself to the one I have already given."

"But this is not fair; you must see that it is not. I love your daughter, and if you deny her to me, you at least owe me a full explanation."

"I owe you nothing but an answer," said the old Squire, with stern gravity.

"I do not consider that I have had an answer yet."

"Then take it now. Madeleine will not marry you without my consent, and my consent you shall never have. Are you satisfied?"

"No."

"You are very hard of comprehension, then. I have already told you the same thing before, in different words."

"What fault do you find with me, Mr. de Lacy?"

"None whatever."

"Then your denial is simply an act of cruel despotism!" exclaimed Major Chester, hotly.

"On the contrary, it is simply an act of justice—to myself."

"But it is Madeleine who is in question now, not you."

"We are one and the same."

"I tell you that Madeleine accepted me," persisted the lover.

"And I tell you that Madeleine will retract."

"Because you bid her."

"Because I ask her. I have never yet found it necessary to exact obedience."

"You will cause her real sorrow."

"It is so natural you should think that, Major Chester. But Madeleine was satisfied with my affection before, and will be satisfied again. I have not the smallest anxiety on her account."

"Then I suppose there is nothing to be said," he answered, resigning himself wofully to his fate.

"Nothing whatever. The question was settled, so far as I was concerned, at the very first."

"And Madeleine's happiness is nothing to you?"

"On the contrary, Madeleine's happiness is my one care and thought."

"But she loves me, sir! I dare affirm that."

"I am quite sure that you think so; but pray do not let us begin the argument all over again. I am quite tired out. As it is, I will answer for Madeleine's happiness fearlessly."

"At any rate, it is only right to warn you, sir, that I shall strain every nerve to see her again."

"You shall see her again without any such exertion, Major Chester. Kindly follow me, and the thing is done."

He led the way out as he spoke, and the young man followed, wondering.

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 2.)

A WONDERFUL MEETING

BY JACK HATLIN.

A stately ship lay rocking in the long swell of the South Pacific. A dead calm; and a dead calm at sea does not mean that the sea is at rest. No—the ocean is never quiet, even for a moment, and when not a breath of air is felt, the great rollers rise and fall without ceasing.

The men are scattered about the decks, and in the tops, some carving whale's teeth, some at work upon the rigging, and one or two engaged in reading. Your old sailor is more of a reader than most people imagine. More "light literature" of the *entertaining* class is sold to such men than any others, because there is implanted in the nature of the sailor a certain love of adventure, and a delight in brave deeds—no matter by whom they may be performed.

The captain is standing on the quarter-deck looking out across the pathless sea. He is young to command so noble a craft, certainly not more than thirty-two, a handsome young Hercules, who has faced the wind and sea for many years. His eyes have an eager look in them, for his heart is away in San Francisco, where a sweet girl has promised, when his ship comes into port, to put her hand in his and aid him in the journey of life.

If he ever comes to port. He is angry at the wind, which will not rise and bear the Water Witch on her way. Angry at the sailors, who take things so coolly, for *their* pay goes on however the wind blows. Whistling for a breeze is slow work, and Arthur Campbell tired of it.

"Confound the luck," he muttered, "Oh, for a wind—the stiffest gale that ever roared across the sea."

Still the same dead calm, and still the ship rose upon the long rollers and dropped heavily into the trough of the sea. Still the sky was blue as jasper, unflecked by a single cloud.

"You want a wind, Arthur," said the first mate, a grizzled old sea-dog coming up to the quarter-deck. "I 'spose you will laugh at me when I tell you that we'll be running under bare poles before five hours."

"Pshaw, Jake," replied Arthur. "No such luck I'm afraid. Only look at that sky."

"I knows it," replied Jake Fisher, shaking his gray head. "I s'pose I'm a blamed fool; but then you know I'm pooty considerable of a prophet, and when I look round me, I seem to *see* the wind."

"You ought to know, Jake," replied Arthur, "and I don't like to doubt you; but only look at that sea, and tell me how you can expect wind soon. And I'm about crazy, too. Jake, she's an angel, and I love her as only a man can love who has never loved a woman except his mother in all his time. A sweet girl—a girl of a thousand. I have no right to love her, Jake, for I'm but a rough sailor, and she the dearest little blossom that ever bloomed."

"Oh, stow that!" roared Jake. "Ain't you a good navigator, and don't the owners say that they ain't got your equal in the line? And whar—I say it boldly, and will lick the man that contradicts—can you find a straighter built young man afloat or ashore. You be blowed; she *must* be a good 'un ef she is too good for you."

"I might have known that I would get a blast from you, if I dared to run myself down," said Arthur, smiling. "Well, God is above all, and may he lead me safely to my darling. Keep the deck, Jake, and I'll go below."

Jake planked the quarter-deck in silence for two hours—casting quick glances at the blue sky, and wondering why, in the face of that, he had dared to prophesy a wind. At the end of the second hour there came a strange, sul'en, leaden hue upon the sky, and the air grew painfully oppressive.

"Hi, there, boy," cried the mate, addressing one of the ship's boys who was engaged in skylarking with the captain's dog under the shelter of the forecastle; "jump down there and ask the captain to look at his barometer. Away you go!"

The boy plunged down the companion-ladder, and two minutes later, Arthur Campbell was on deck; for a glance at the barometer revealed the fact that a storm was coming up rapidly.

"Call all hands," he said. "I'd sooner strip her myself than let the wind do it for me."

A hoarse voice was heard at the hatchway.

"All hands on deck. Tumble up—tumble up there, you sleepers! All hands on deck, ahoy."

A dozen men quickly joined those already on deck and in the tops, and their dark forms were quickly seen upon the yards, furling all the lighter sails except the storm-jib and stay-sail, with two reefs in the main and foresails. A sudden change had taken place in the appearance of the sky. Dark clouds began to peep up behind the distant-horizon, and rolled up rapidly, scurrying to and fro in a strange manner.

"It 'll come with a *whoop* when it does come," said Jake, who was standing near the captain, "and it 'll try every stick in the Water Witch or I'm no prophet."

"Lay *down* from aloft!" roared the captain, suddenly, and the men slid rapidly to the deck, not a moment too soon, for just then a wall of cloud which seemed to sweep along the bosom of the sea hurled itself upon the ship and she bowed to it until the long yards touched the crests of the waves. But the two strong men at the helm let her fall off, and she rose slowly from the surge and was off like a frightened hare across the pathless sea. A strange cloud enveloped her, through which it was impossible to see anything at a distance of twenty yards, and no one knew so well as Arthur Campbell the danger of "running free" on such a day as this. But he knew, too, that he dared not do anything else, and so, in silence and dread, with the men at their stations, the Water Witch flew on her way.

"If we meet anything!" hissed Jake Fisher in the ear of his commander.

"Let us hope for the best," replied the captain. "Perhaps it will clear up a little. Where is the fog horn?"

Jake shouted to one of the men, who quickly came forward with a great fog horn which is used upon ships to warn off others lost in the fog. The sailor had scarcely put it to his lips, when three shadowy masts with their maze of rigging were seen through the haze close aboard.

"Starboard!" screamed Arthur, springing to the wheel, and in his eagerness putting his hand on the spokes. "Starboard, for your lives; hard!"

The wheel in the hands of the two men went over like lightning, while the men, in obedience to the call of the mate, tugged at the starboard braces. But they were too late to avert the shock entirely, and the bowsprit of the Water Witch darted in over the rail of the other craft, and she struck slightly on the quarter and glanced off, tearing away the mizzen rattlins as she went. But all breathed more freely as they flew on their course, because the shock had been so slight, when the eyes of Jake Fisher fell upon a mass of rigging entangled with the bowsprit, in the midst of which hung suspended a *woman's* form, clinging for life to the spar.

"Out there, Benton and Forbes," cried Arthur. "Quick!"

The two men darted out and quickly brought the lady aboard. She was not injured, but looked wildly about her as Captain Campbell advanced.

"Arthur!"

In an instant she was in his arms, her golden head pillowed on his manly breast. It was Angie Forbes, the girl who had promised to be his wife, who had been called to the "States" by a peremptory message from home. She had been carried over the rail by the bowsprit of the Water Witch; but clinging to the spar, had been saved, to find shelter in the arms which gave her protection, and with the heart which beat for her, until they were called to pass through the valley of the shadow.

Help the Torpid Organs.—When the body is in a state of health, the food taken into the stomach acts on the bowels as a stimulant, causing in them that worm-like motion by which their contents are expelled. The liver being in a natural condition, the flow of bile (which is a mild cathartic) into the intestines is ample and regular, and hence the discharges are easy and sufficiently frequent. The reverse of all this constitutes costiveness, and the only true method of cure is to restore the functional activity of the two important organs which use the bowels as a sewer for the egress of waste matter. For this purpose HOSTETTER'S STOMACH BITTERS can be confidentially recommended as the most effective of all medicines. It is not too much to say that chronic constipation would be unknown if the Bitters were in universal use as a remedy in the earlier stages of the complaint. At this period of the year, when dyspepsia with all its kindred disorders are so apt to be engendered and aggravated by the dampness of the atmosphere, this unequalled stimulant, tonic and alterative should be taken daily.

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THE
SATURDAY EVENING POST.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, NOV. 8, 1873.

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LETTERS FROM ZIG.

RUBBISH HUNTERS.

Why is a dog-eared, worn-out old book any more valuable than a pair of old shoes?

What do you say to that conundrum? I can't answer it. It's one of the many things in this world that I can't find out. I can't understand for my soul and body why anybody should go crazy over a lot of unsightly old traps of no use to anybody in Heaven, earth, or the other place. Or, if folks must lose their senses over rusty old relics, why isn't one rusty old relic as good as another rustic old relic? Why isn't one of Shakspeare's teeth or toe-nails just as valuable as a lock of Shakspeare's hair? It passes my comprehension. Indeed, I think toe-nails would not be at all bad as mementoes of absent friends and dead people. Come to remember, a certain corn doctor in our city has already put into outward form, in a little different form, to be sure, the idea I have hinted at. You'd laugh your eyes out to see this corn-doctor's precious relics, though at the same time it might make you sort of faint about the stomach. This brilliant genius of a chiropodist does not extract a corn at retail, a piece at a time, but takes it out in the lump. And he carefully saves the corns as he extracts them. Every fine figure of a corn he has taken out since he began his brilliant career has been preserved by this gifted corn-doctor. And what do you suppose this extraordinary man did with 'em? He pasted 'em carefully upon a black ground in the shape of letters and words, and made his corn-doctor sign out of them. Then he nailed the thing up outside his front-door, and there it hangs to this day, pointing a moral if not adorning a tale, an object of admiration and a warning to all passers by. You've no idea how horrible it looks. I wonder he didn't enlarge on his happy thought, and make his beautiful corns up into flowers and wreaths, and crosses and and anchors and things. I went past it once. As I did so, vivid visions of where those horrible corns came from, uprose to my mind's eye. I saw, plain as day, all the horny old toes and black toe-nails, all the distorted, knotty bones which came of vanity and tight boots, and finally, my ears seemed to catch the echo of all the dreadful swearing done by the original proprietors of those said corns. Heart and stomach both failed me at that, and I hurried by feeling pale all over. Ever after that day I pass the corn sign on the opposite side of the street. Like the Levite in the Bible, I pass by on the other side.

I only mentioned the corn-doctor's corn sign to show you what may be done in the way of relic-hunting when a man puts his mind to it. That corn-doctor had an eye to bread and butter when he invented that extraordinary sign. Therefore the corn-doctor was all well enough, preserving the relics of departed pains. But what can anybody say in defence of those queer monomaniacs who spend years gathering up the old rubbish of bygone times, when there is no money in it?

What put me to pondering over the question was this: At our Exposition, nailed up high and dry in the Natural History Department, along with the beautiful shells, the rare stones and bits of ore and those things, were two clumsy, worn-out old wooden chairs. Tacked to them was a notice stating that the said ugly old chairs had been built and sat upon in a grocery, by somebody, about seventy years ago, while yet the Injun tricks of the noble red man were familiar to the minds of men in these parts. Now suppose they had been built and sat upon in a grocery in Cincinnati seventy years ago, what did anybody want to see them nailed up against the wall in the Exposition for? A rough old wooden chair isn't handsome, and it isn't a bit rare. On the contrary, I've seen whole houses that didn't have any other sort of chair in them. And again, posted up prominently in the Art Gallery of our Exposition, were several abominable dingy old pictures, no prettier to the eye than a square of brown paper would have been. I assure you solemnly, I'd rather look at a piece of brown paper all day than at such pictures as those. And still there are people who will give their weight in gold for the scandalous old things. I wish I only had the money such demented individuals waste, just to show them how to spend it properly! Their madness is only less melancholy than that of another tribe of maniacs—those unhappy people who are crazy on the subject of the portraits of their ancestors. You've been in houses, haven't you, where people had all their grandmothers and aunts and uncles for three or four generations strung up around the walls, hiding the pretty wall paper with their various uglinesses! If one has a remarkably handsome ancestor, very handsome indeed—handsome enough to be a joy forever, then it's all well enough to hang him or her on the parlor wall, for one's friend to admire. But it must be an uncommonly good looking person who will bear being looked at all the time.

If you have relations whose likeness you want to preserve on account of their moral worth, then preserve your kin by all means; but hide them away where you can contemplate their many virtues all by yourself. Don't, I beseech you, hang them on your parlor-wall, and expose them to the cruel gaze of a cold world, with their bald-heads and hook noses and squint-eyes, and horrible old-fashioned scoop-bonnets and peaked-waist dresses. What in nation does a cold world care about 'em? I've been in parlors where the walls were enough to give you a nightmare. Here was a hideous old chap, with gluttonous fat cheek and a brandy nose. There was a sainted grandmother, with a parrot's beak for a nose—and pinching, griping stinginess written on every line of her leathery countenance. Over yonder was a scrofulous little angel who died young, and close beside the scrofulous angel was the hope of the family, a fast young fellow with a yellow neck-tie and a shallow, silly face. You've no idea how disgusted one becomes at having to look at such faces six months at a time. Therefore I class the family-portrait collectors among the rubbish-hunters.

And I say,—if you've a lot of pictures of stupid kinsfolks, of no value except just because they are kin to you, hide 'em, do for pity's sake! Don't turn your parlor-walls into a family-portrait gallery. It's bad taste, very.

I don't know for my life why folks should prize anything just because it is old. Age alone can't give value to a thing. I know a person who paid five hundred dollars for an old Bible, all blackened and worm-eaten, with a part of the leaves gone at that. I don't know what he wanted it for, I'm sure. He could have got a pretty new Bible with pictures in it, for a hundredth part of the money, and for all he reads a Bible of any sort, he'd have been just as well off with a last year's almanac. He has two large rooms full of dingy, dilapidated, musty old books, of no earthly good to mortal man. Nobody ever reads 'em; nobody ever will read 'em. And yet he takes as much pride in that musty old rubbish, as if every separate dingy, dusty book were a priceless jewel. He has paid fabulous sums for the lot of unsightly trash, enough to feed and clothe for a year all the poor children in the region round about. He has another department devoted to what he calls "curiosities," the most villainous-looking pile of rubbish you ever set eyes on. There isn't one really useful or beautiful thing in the whole lot. I do think the man's crazy.

No more am I capable of entering into the feelings of those lunes who spend their summers in bug-hunting. To my dull soul, a bug is a bug, nothing more. And what satisfaction it is to anybody to gather up a pile of bugs, I can't understand. I'm sure every June I wish heartily there wasn't a bug in the world. And a lot of unhappy butterflies, nailed to the wall by pins cruelly stuck through their backs while they are yet alive, is about as unpleasant a sight as I care to see. "Specimens" indeed! They are specimens of craziness, I should say.

ZIG.

A French Romance.

Here is a little French romance that comes to us without names or dates, but is doubtless just as true as if the author had supplied these accessories. A lady in Paris was supposed to have died of grief at being wedded against her inclination. She was taken out of her grave by her lover, who suspected she was not really dead, and resuscitated by his exertions, fled with him to England. After living happily there together for ten years, the strangely-united couple ventured to visit Paris, where the first husband, accidentally meeting the lady, was struck by her resemblance to his dead wife, found out her abode, and finally claimed her for his own. When the case came for trial, the second husband did not dispute the fact of identity, but pleaded that his rival had renounced all claim to the lady by ordering her to be buried, without first making sure she was dead, and that she would have been dead and rotting in her grave if he had not rescued her. The court was saved the trouble of deciding the knotty point, for, seeing that it was likely to pronounce against them, the fond pair quietly slipped out of France, and found refuge in a foreign clime, where their love continued sacred and entire till death conveyed them to those happy regions where love knows no end, and is confined within no limits.

Biographical Sketches.

JOAN OF ARC.

BY MAURICE F. EGAN.

When Charles VI. was suddenly stricken with madness in the forest of Mans, a flood of calamity rolled over France. Philip the Hardy, of Burgundy, and the Duke of Orleans disputed for supreme power in the State. The former was the uncle, the latter the brother of the insane king. But as long as Philip the Hardy lived, the swords of the opposing parties were unstained by blood. It was not until 1407 that John the Fearless caused his rival, the Duke of Orleans, to be assassinated.

This murder was the prelude to a civil war which for years deluged France with blood, and reduced the country to a state bordering on barbarism. To add to the horrors of internal discord, an enemy—the English army—appeared from without.

On the death of the afflicted king, his son, Charles VII., claimed the throne, and at the same time Henry VI. of England was proclaimed King of France.

In the preceding reign, the English had gained the brilliant victory of Agincourt—a day marked with blood in the annals of France, for on that day there was scarce a home in the land unvisited by death. Paris had fallen, and in the autumn of 1428, the Earl of Salisbury marched to Orleans, the key to the southern provinces.

Civil war and foreign invasion had almost exhausted the resources of France, but all the means of resistance and defence that despairing patriotism could accumulate were employed to save that important city from the grasp of the invaders.

Both women and men united to defend their homes. The English advanced amid the roar of their cannon; but the besieged met them with showers of iron hoops, stones, hot oil, boiling water, and quick lime. Certainly a warm reception.

The siege dragged on for months; each day the distress of the inhabitants increased; but when all seemed lost—when the darkest hour had come, Heaven sent relief in the person of a simple peasant-girl of Domremy. Men had done their best and failed; the prophecy that France would be delivered by a woman was about to be fulfilled.

This maiden, named Joan, was the daughter of Jacques D'Arc and Isabella Romée. *Romée* being, according to Lamartine, an appellation given to any one who had made a pilgrimage to Rome. Jacques D'Arc and his wife were honest people, of good repute, who earned their bread by cultivating a small piece of land and raising some cattle. Joan had three brothers and a sister; but she was distinguished from them by her singular piety and gentleness. While her light-hearted companions indulged in joyous sports, after the labors of the day, Joan was generally employed in offering up her orisons in a corner of the village church.

The place of her birth was Domremy, a little village situated on the borders of Champagne, Burgundy and Lorraine. She was born in A. D. 1411.

An old chronicler asserts that in her childhood while keeping her sheep, the birds of the air would come at her call, attracted by her love and gentleness. This may be only a popular legend; but it is certain that when Jean Moreau, of Rouen, was sent by her enemies to inquire into her character, he brought back word that not the slightest imputation was urged against her by the inhabitants of her village.

Of the motive that induced her—a timid, contemplative peasant maiden—to attempt the herculean work of delivering France from the English, it can only be said that if it originated with herself alone, she was as loyal-hearted as Leonidas, as brave as the Maccabees, and as patriotic as Washington. But, according to her evidence given before her judges, the idea of delivering France did not originate with herself. She believed herself to be but an especial instrument selected by God to carry out His designs, and she unscrupulously obeyed "the voices" that directed her. We will not argue upon the questions of her divine inspiration and miraculous visions, although it seems impossible that an ignorant country girl, not only unaided, but opposed, could have accomplished such a task without direct, miraculous assistance from above. Her enemies did not deny her inspiration; they asserted that its source was the father of lies.

When she was only thirteen years old, she says in her evidence, on a summer day, about the hour of noon, an apparition, surrounded by a great light, appeared to her. It was the Archangel Michael. She was much frightened, but his "very noble" voice reassured her. "He told me of the great misery of the kingdom of France, and that I should make haste to help my king. He told me that St. Catherine and St. Margaret would come to me, and that I was to do whatever they ordered."

It seems that honest Jacques D'Arc had a dim presentiment of his daughter's destiny. He had dreamt that she was leaving home with men-at-arms.

"If I knew that such a thing was to happen," he said to his sons, "I would order you to throw her in the water; and, if you refused to do it, I would do it myself."

She was inspired by the voices of her two saints, to go to the king's captain, Chevalier Boudricourt, at Vaucouleurs. There were many difficulties in her way. She went to her uncle, Laxart, who lived between Domremy and Vaucouleurs, and asked him to let her live with him and his wife for a time. He agreed, and obtained the consent of her parents. She told him her wonderful story, and at last convinced him of its truth. Laxart went to Boudricourt with the tale. The rough captain answered that he ought to box his niece's ears soundly, and send her back to her father.

Joan was not disheartened. She persuaded Laxart to accompany her to Vaucouleurs. By dint of perseverance she obtained admission into Boudricourt's presence. In spite of her promise that she would conduct the king to Rheims, and have him anointed and crowned there, the captain would give her no aid beyond writing to the king concerning her.

Finding that their daughter had really gone to Vaucouleurs in search of men-at-arms, Jacques D'Arc was driven almost to frenzy; but also finding that persons of repute believed in her mission, he and his wife made no further opposition, and when Joan begged their pardon for not having consulted them, the worthy pair accorded it.

The king's letter came in answer to Boudricourt's, and he, still doubting, furnished her with an escort to the king at Chinon.

No wonder Boudricourt shook his head at this girl of seventeen, who, from the frontiers of France, was about to attempt a passage through a country swarming with men-at-arms, in the hope of inducing the king to entrust her with his last soldiers. "By the advice of her voices," she had forsaken her feminine attire and donned the equipment of a cavalier.

On the 24th of February, 1429, Joan arrived safely at the court of King Charles, to announce that she had travelled one hundred and fifty leagues, to save him and Orleans. With his usual irresolution, King Charles was undecided whether to give her a hearing or not; but the nobles were much impressed by her affability, piety, and confidence in her mission. After some delay, an audience was accorded to her. Joan, at this time, was tall and well-made, her complexion fair, with black eyes, and her hair cut short and round as was the fashion among knights. After a long examination before a learned assembly, the Maid of Arc set forth from Chinon for Orleans. She was now chief commander of the army. Arriving before Orleans, she forced the English to raise the siege and retreat. Her courage surpassed that of her bravest soldiers. Her banner always waved in the van. Managing her war-horse with the skill of a practised chevalier, the Maid led her army from victory to victory, until King Charles was crowned at Rheims. Her mission was now ended. She implored the king to allow her to return to her original obscurity. The only reward she asked was, that all taxes might be remitted in the villages of Domremy and Greux. The latter request was granted; the former refused. Unwillingly, she remained with the army. Success and inspiration had deserted her. She was captured by the English, and burned in the public square of Rouen, May 30th, 1431.

HOME AND SOCIETY.

HOUSEKEEPING.

This is a fruitful subject, both for conversation and newspaper articles, but it is one that never wears out, for it possesses a great variety of aspects.

Of course I assume that every young woman, whether married or single, should thoroughly understand all the mysteries of housekeeping, and be able to perform all its complex duties; for upon this part of her education a great part of the happiness of her future life depends—far more indeed than upon the knowledge she has gained by toiling through the text books of the most popular boarding school or college that our country affords.

Not that we would decry the value of the knowledge and accomplishments procured at these institutions.

Far from that! for my heart's desire is to train my daughters to the same standard of education as my sons, and to fill their minds with all practical knowledge; but I do desire to urge upon our young lady readers the necessity of learning how to make good bread, to roast, broil and boil meats, and to cook vegetables in a superior manner, as well as to concoct dainty desserts, make preserves, and the like. Also, to learn how to sweep, dust, make beds, wash dishes, and perform all the labors of the household in a proper and expeditious manner.

There is a right and a wrong way of doing everything, and I would that all daughters should learn in the Home College how to do work in the best manner, before they enter the school of married life, where vacations are seldom given.

If a young girl marries while utterly deficient of domestic knowledge, although she may possess the highest culture, and be a proficient in all accomplishments, yet she will find that they profit her nothing in managing a household.

Without some domestic training she cannot do her duty, and will soon become heart-sick and discouraged at her own ignorance of practical things.

No matter how many servants she may keep, unless she can also engage the services of a housekeeper, she must be the head of the house, must give the directions for the daily work, provide the essentials, and be the daily directress of all its concerns.

Trained servants are not always to be had for money; but if a lady has been trained in the *minutiæ* of housekeeping, she can take green hands and train them into invaluable servants. But she must have been to school herself before she can attempt to teach others, and therefore I beg of our lady readers to pay some little heed to this fact, and not to take upon themselves the responsibilities of a housekeeper until they have graduated at the Home College and received its diploma.

While visiting at San Francisco a few years since, I was invited to lunch at a friend's house, where a Chinaman was the only servant employed, and he performed his duties in a most masterly manner, giving perfect satisfaction in all its departments. The household consisted of my friend, her husband and her father; and "John" was cook, laundress, chamber-maid, etc.

"I do nothing but arrange the flowers in the baskets and vases, and dust the parlors," said the lady. "John was trained three years by a New England lady, and he is an invaluable servant, and has never given me the least uneasiness."

Ah! there lies the secret of the domestic grievance of the period—the need of trained housekeepers.

Good housekeepers make good servants; and if all the Norahs and Dinahs of our acquaintance had only been trained as well as "John," there would be much less misery in the badly-disciplined households of our country.

I would not have our girls devote all their time to the matters of the *cuisine;* I would have them play, sing, draw, and dance finely; I would have them instructed in all historical lore, and mistress of all the sciences; but I would have them lay aside all these essentials for two or three hours daily, while they step into the kitchen and learn the intricacies of bread-making, meat cookery, &c.

And when you marry, all the responsibility of providing the food for the household should devolve upon your shoulders. If your means are ever so abundant, you should learn how to make a good selection of the various articles required for household purposes. And if you have a limited income, it is essential that you should know how to make a little go a great way—should understand how to concoct savory dishes out of small means; and in either case a lady should know how to manage her household, so that her wedded happiness may not be shipwrecked by her own ignorance and carelessness. Much money is squandered by bad cooking and by unfaithful servants, and unless the girls of the period will take head to their ways and not attempt to perform duties of which they are utterly ignorant, there is no remedy for the evil.

"And nothing loveller can be found
In woman than to study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote."

DAISY EYEBRIGHT.

☞ A book is a letter to the unknown friends one has in the world.

OBSERVATIONS.

BY MAX ADELER.

[Editors will please bear in mind that the following Observations by MAX ADELER, in common with the other original contents of THE POST, are copyrighted. We give this notice on account of the constant "appropriation" of MAX ADELER'S articles, without the requisite credit being given either to the writer or the paper.—*Ed. Sat. Eve. Post.*]

—Nothing interests us more, in looking over a pile of exchanges, than to observe the intensity of the energy with which country editors conduct a political campaign. Your city editor often displays a certain amount of vehemence, but his wildest frenzy is calmness, is absolute slumberous repose itself, when compared with the frantic enthusiasm of the rural journalist. The latter succeeds in getting up as much fury over a candidate for constable as a city editor does over an aspirant for the Presidency. He will turn out column after column of double-leaded type, in which he will demonstrate with a marvellous profusion of adjectives that, if you should roll all the martyrs and prophets and saints into one, you would have a much smaller amount of virtue than can be found in that one humble man who wants to be constable. He will prove to you that unless that particular person is elected constable, the entire fabric of American institutions will totter to its base and fall a bewildering and hopeless ruin, while the merciless despots who grind enslaved millions beneath their iron heels, will regard the hideous and irreclaimable chaos with exulting and fiendish laughter, and amid the remnants of a once proud republic will erect bastiles in which they will forge chains to fetter the wrists of dismayed and heart-broken patriots. He will ask you to take your choice between electing that man constable and witnessing the annihilation of the proud work for which Washington and the revolutionary patriots bled and died. The man who runs against his man, will be proved to be a base and despicable myrmidon of the effete monarchies of the old world, and it will be shown that all the vices which have corrupted the race since Adam's fall are concentrated in that one individual. The day after election, if his man wins, the editor will decorate his paper with a whole array of roosters and a menagerie of 'coons, and inform a breathless world that the nation is once more saved. If he loses, he will omit any reference to his frightful prophecies, keep his roosters in the closet, and mildly assert that the opposition man is not so bad after all, and that the right party must triumph next time for certain. Then he will simmer down for a year, and, during that period, will rest his overwrought brain, while he edits his paper with a pair of predatory shears and a dishonest paste pot.

—A London paper announces that "the Madden collection of 27,000 ballads is going to the United States." We know nothing about this collection, but we do know a girl who is capable of singing the entire 27,000 at one spurt, just as we are taking our afternoon nap. She lives next door to us, and she has a voice that creaks like the axle of a rusty wheelbarrow. To hear that girl sing "No one to love" eighty or ninety times in one afternoon, is to feel a strong impulse to suicide. No wonder she has no one to love. The man that consolidates with her must either be a graduate of the deaf and dumb asylum, or he must have his ear drums taken out right after the ceremony. If this young vocalist ever gets loose among that Madden collection of 27,000 ballads, she will madden the neighbors worse than the collection is maddened.

—Mr. Bellows has been paying attentions to young Miss Snively for some time, and a few evenings ago he called for the purpose of making a formal proposal. Miss Snively, it would appear, has had other and rather unfortunate love affairs in the past, and a melancholy experience has made her singularly cautious. After talking with her for awhile Bellows hemmed and hawed and blushed, and then, suddenly seizing her hand, he was about to plump the question right out, when Miss Snively interrupted him.

"Ah, excuse me for asking you, Mr. Bellows, but are you going to propose?"

Amazed and somewhat bewildered, Mr. Bellows replied,

"Well I—that is I should say that—that I did, perhaps cherish some—some—as it were, some—idea, that is to say—well, yes."

"Oh, very well," rejoined Miss Snively, "very well, but just wait a moment please while I call my aunt down-stairs."

"Wh-wh-wh-what for?" asked Bellows, in astonishment.

"Why so that I can have a witness in case I'm obliged to sue you for breach of promise of course. The last man who proposed got off; but I reckon you won't if I know how to fix things. Wait a minute." And then as Miss Snively went out in search of her aunt, Bellows emerged into the entry and glided through the front door. And mashing his hat down over his eyes he dissipated his love's young dream, stifled his grief, bit off an inordinately large piece of tobacco and went home to bed. Miss Snively will not sue.

—Just after Mrs. Rumble was married she went to housekeeping. She was entirely ignorant of the art and wholly unfamiliar with the utensils with which it was conducted, and Mr. Rumble was no wiser. Mrs. Rumble's mother ordered her furniture and things for the house, and on the day they arrived Rumble came home and found his wife mad. "That outrageous, unprincipled storekeeper," she said, "knows I am inexperienced and he has tried to impose on me, William. He has sent up a tin wash-basin full of holes, so that it leaks awfully. He must think I'm simple if he believes I'm goin' to keep such a thing as that." William desired to see it, and Mrs. Rumble went into the kitchen and brought out—a colander. Mr. Rumble examined it and suggested that it might perhaps be worm-eaten. But he said it was a scandalous fraud anyhow, and he put on his hat, wrapped the colander in paper and went down to see the man about it. When he came home, he had the colander with him, and he maintained a gloomy silence as he soused it down on the kitchen table, and refused to explain about it; but Mrs. Rumble obtained the necessary information in a subsequent interview with her mother. She thinks now perhaps William would be happier if she had a more intimate familiarity with colanders and such things.

—When Stotesbury was a bachelor, he boarded with a Mrs. Smiley, a landlady who lived in a very large house, the upper rooms of which were, for the most part, empty. As the cold weather came on, Stotesbury concluded to buy a stove with which to make himself comfortable. His room was very small, and he purchased the most diminutive stove he could find. It certainly would not hold more than a couple of quarts of coal. Everybody has seen such stoves at the stores. There was no stove-pipe-hole in Stotesbury's room, so he had an aperture punched in the ceiling, with the intention to use the pipe-hole in the vacant room above. He got about fifteen feet of pipe, and when it was all fitted below and run through the floor, he went up to put the end in the chimney. He was surprised to find that the vacant room also had no stovepipe-hole. It must be in the attic-room above. So he bought twenty feet more pipe, cut another hole in the ceiling, and, after fixing the sections on, he proceeded to the garret with the intent to run the pipe into the flue. Imagine Stotesbury's anger when he found that there was no hole in the chimney up there either! In a fury he went down-stairs to examine the house from the outside to discover just where the chimney was situated. He found that it was over on the other side of the building. Then he bought forty feet more pipe, cut a hole from the attic-room to the entry, from thence to the other attic, and then ran his pipe all the way across, and at last got it safely into the chimney. There was so much pipe and so little stove that the stove looked like a mere excrescence on the end of the pipe; the draught was fearful, and sometimes when the wind was high it would draw the entire bed of live coals up out of the stove and shoot them out of the chimney with terrific force. Crowds of people used to gather around Mrs. Smiley's house on windy nights to watch the chimney belching forth red-hot stones and ashes in a way that would have made Mount Vesuvius ashamed of itself. Stotesbury used up two tons of coal a week in an effort to supply the volcanic eruption with fuel. One night, however, so Stotesbury tells us, there was a hurricane, and as soon as it struck the flue of Mrs. Smiley's chimney, it drew Stotesbury's stove into the pipe, turned the pipe wrongside out, and lifted the whole concern up through the chimney. The next morning passers-by were amazed to see seventy-five feet of reversed stovepipe standing on top of the chimney, with Stotesbury's stove at the end, swaying about with the wind. This is Stotesbury's narrative. We do not vouch for it. We only know that he was educated to believe that lies are wicked.

—We have been greatly shocked at an account which recently appeared in the papers of a man who every day for years smoked eight and ten cigars, and chewed a paper of fine-cut tobacco, and was finally stricken by paralysis in consequence of his reckless indulgence. The lesson which this awful calamity teaches to the young is of the most impressive character. Let the boy who is tempted to begin the use of tobacco reflect upon the fate of this unhappy man and the causes which led to it; let him remember that but for this one fault the victim of the disaster would now have vigorous health and unalloyed happiness; let him take warning from the result, and now, when the vista of life is opening bright and beautiful before him, let him highly resolve that as the miserable paralytic smoked ten cigars and chewed a whole paper of fine-cut a day, so he will never permit himself to become the slave of such a vicious habit, but will abandon cigars and fine-cut, and smoke pipes and chew plug tobacco exclusively. This awful example, in such an event, will not be without profit.

—Old Mrs. Hillegass read in one of the papers that "a globe of gold fish hanging in the sun, in the window of a house in Maine, set the casement on fire." Most persons would have understood that the globe, filled with water, acted as a burning-glass; but Mrs. Hillegass is panicky and apt to jump at conclusions. She instantly conceived an idea that it had just been discovered that fish have an inflammatory and explosive tendency, which renders them as dangerous as gunpowder or coal-oil. Then she suddenly threw down the newspaper, called the servant-girl, and proceeded to the cellar, where she found a mackerel and four cold codfish-cakes. These she carried up-stairs, at arms' length, on a shovel, and put them under the pump, while Mary Jane turned on the water and wet the incendiary substances thoroughly. After which Mrs. Hillegass buried the mackerel and the fish-cakes at the foot of the garden, and came up to the house so nearly out of breath that she could hardly remark to Mary Jane, "I'm not agoin' to have this house made a smokin' ruin in my old age by any of them fish if I never eat another herrin'. You hear me, Mary Jane?"

—The daughter of Don Carlos of Spain is a very charming young lady, but her visitors have some difficulty in making themselves understood when they call, because of the dimensions of her name. More than one hired girl has caught cold and gone into galloping consumption by keeping the front door open while young gentlemen-callers ask if Senorita Blanche-de-Castile-Maria-de-la-Conception-Therese-Francoise-d'Assise-Marguerite-Jeanne-Beatrice-Charlotte-Louise-Fernande-Adelgonde-Elvire-Ildefonse-Regine-Josephe-Michelle-Gabrielle-Raphaelle is in; and one servant girl called the police because she thought the visitor was swearing at her. It took eight able-bodied clergymen to baptize her, and her visiting card is made as large as a cellar door and carried round on a push cart. Her monogram is said to resemble a handful of fishing worms; and when she has her name put on her umbrella, the engraver begins at the handle, works up one side, over the end of the ferule and down the other side in order to crowd it all in. She was named after an entire orphan asylum.

—In looking over a fire insurance policy the other day, we were struck with some of the oddities of the classifications of materials. Umbrellas, for instance, were placed under the head of "Hazardous." An umbrella certainly is hazardous if you stand it in a corner in a public place on a wet day, or if you lend it to a friend, but we never imagined that it was of such an incendiary nature that it needed to be protected by an extra premium from bursting suddenly and spontaneously into flames. But this is not all. "Gunny bags," it appears, are also hazardous, and so is "soap." The danger of a bar of soap catching fire, and causing a devastating conflagration, seems to our ignorant mind, particularly small. But of course these insurance people know better, that is the reason why they put such an inflammable substance as "iron castings" on the "hazardous" list, and why they class such a violent explosive as "earthenware" under the same head. "Shirts" we find classed as "extra hazardous" we suppose because of their propensity to ignite when exposed to the air, and "wigs" are ranged in the same class probably because they will climb down off of bureaus at night, and set fire to the chairs. It is a wonderful business, this insurance, and one of the most remarkable things about it is that when you call to take out a policy, the officers always treat you as if you were a prince, while when you drop in after a fire to mention your losses, they always look at you as if you had just been caught stealing something.

☞ A suppressed resolve will betray itself in the eyes.

☞ Defect in manners is usually the deficiency of fine perceptions.

THE LAST REQUEST.

BY GRACE GARLAND.

Come sit beside me, love, and let my arms around you twine;
As I soon must quit this temple for a home with the Divine—
Soon will leave you desolate, in deep, heart-piercing woe,
And there are words of comfort I would speak before I go.
You have borne, with loving tenderness, my often childish way,
Ever striving thus to shield me from the burden of the day;
You have idolized me, husband dear, so gentle, noble, true;
While second only to our God has been my love for you.
And our little ones so precious, whom we've held so very dear,
Will keep them close to God and thee; oh, promise me sincere,
It has been my pride to lead them nearer, nearer to our God;
Yet as Christians now, we'll meekly bow beneath the chastening rod;
But oh, 'tis hard, so very hard to leave you here alone;
Will another come to fill the place of your loved and lost, your own?
If so, I fear my little girls will often sadly miss
A mother's tender, sweet caress, a mother's good-night kiss;
But choose one with a loving heart and Christian spirit, true,
And for your sake, perhaps she'll love and bless my darlings, too.
When the busy cares of day are o'er, oh, think of me at even;
'Tis then I'll come to bless and guard and guide you home to Heaven.
Our union there will happier be than any here below,
As we wander, with our loving hand, where fadeless flowers grow;
Oh, keep my memory green, dear one, while life itself doth last,
'Twill prove a golden link between the present and the past.
And now, good-night, be faithful, love, to the sacred trust I've given,
When a glorious dawn will greet us on the blissful shores of Heaven.

A HIDDEN WRONG;

OR,

Too Trusting and Too Fair.

BY MRS. ELIZABETH MORRISON.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOUBETTE'S HOUSE.

Dr. Heatherton's patient, the old Frenchman Soubette, confirmed old Rosetta's opinion of his disease by remaining very bad, and making no satisfactory effort toward recovery.

The doctor controlled the terrible pain from which the miserable man suffered, but his weakness and fever increased, and the colored nurse shook her head ominously when the doctor having walked over from his last visited patient where he left his carriage, entered the house one morning.

"He'a mighty low dis morning, dat's sartin, doctor," she observed as she led him into the small room opening from Mr. Soubette's chamber. "He's been sleeping for a little while and lying quiet, but all last night he kicked and raved like he was crazy, yah ha, he talked mighty funny den, I tell you, old master did."

This was the first opportunity Heatherton had found, in spite of his best efforts, to speak to the old woman without the cognizance of Soubette; and although his visits to the house had been frequent, and purposely made at unexpected times, he had been unable to see the least trace of Eugene's presence, so that at last he had come to almost doubt his own sight in discovering the artist there.

Here, however, was a chance, and one he was not willing to leave untried; the Frenchman was asleep, and if he was any judge of the human countenance, Rosetta was not indisposed for confidential conversation.

He began by assuring himself of the reality of Soubette's slumber, and being satisfied on that point, he made Rosetta a handsome present of coin at which she grinned and nodded approvingly.

"And now I want you to tell me what became of that young gentleman whom I saw here the first night of my coming?" he said in a low but audible tone.

"Sartin, sartin," returned Rosetta, "I know'd you need him jis' as sure as I know'd you had eyes, and what's more I spec' he know'd you, 'cause he acted so queer."

"Yes, I knew him," the doctor said impatiently, "pray lose no time, your master may rouse from this fitful sleep at any moment, so lose no time in telling me all you know about my friend."

"Den he's your friend? Oh, golly, young master's your friend!"

"Yes, yes, go on."

"Ise going on," Rosetta said, and so she did after some little preamble about her not breaking faith with Soubette until she saw that he was likely to die, and began to dread her own helplessness when left alone in the world without a friend.

"Dat's what I want, you see," said the old woman, slyly. "I'se getting old, and when master's gone nobody would care for dis old soul 'cept she can tell 'em something worth hearing."

"If you can give me any information about my friend, I shall certainly remember you kindly, Rosie," the doctor said, "and you may rely on me in the future if you make yourself useful now."

"You'se a gentleman, dat's what I say," cried Rosetta, approvingly," and so was young master too, only he's gone now, and I can't tell where. Now don't you rile your feelings, doctor, but jes' listen to it all. Old master has some mighty queer folks a-coming here, and 'mong 'em is dat Jim, dat come here de night you fust come. Well, one night afore dat when 'twas getting near morning I woke up sudden-like, and I hears talking down here, and so I slips down to listen. Master has a queer kind of bell that wakes him and nobody else, and with that he lets in folks at night, he's done it for years, but this time I jes thought I'd see who it was. When I got to de door I see dat Jim, and an elegant young gentleman not one of the kind Jim used to fetch was sitting here, and dey was talking 'bout de young gent's pa and ma. Golly, didn't he look pale and 'cited when he spoke of dem dead and gone folks, and old master promised to help him trace 'em all up out of der graves I spect, and Jim he was to help and git lots of money for his share. Dat's true, doctor, blest ef 'taint; dat young gent come here and talked dat way, and stayed round old master till all of a sudden he disappears, and I don't know nuffin 'bout him."

"And when did you see him last?" the doctor asked, excitedly; but before he could receive a reply, the woman sprang up with frightened eyes, and opening a door that seemed part of the wall, showed a wide aperture, into which she thrust him in terrified haste, just as the entry door unclosed to admit Jim Hall, who saluted Rosetta with something like a growl.

"What's the old 'un up to?" asked Jim.

"Old master's sleeping, Master Jim," Rosetta answered, cheerfully. "Poor old master, he ain't very strong now, and needs a snooze when he can get it, you know," she added.

"Well, I ain't got time to fool, so I'm bound to see him," Jim said, doggedly.

Rosetta seemed to oppose him, and Heatherton, to whom every sound was distinctly audible, though he stood in utter darkness, heard her beg the man to desist, though with such an amount of noise that Soubette's querulous voice came piping in broken accents from the bed to demand what was the matter.

Then Jim plunged at once into the subject of his visit.

"I want to know where young De Courcy is," he demanded. "You know our bargain and you see us agree to it all square and straight, yet you let him sneak off and do me out of my share. Curse you, if I don't believe you're trying to rob me, and if I did—"

From the frightened cry of the sick man it seemed that the angry Jim had made a demonstration of personal violence, but Rosetta only laughed. "I guess Master Jim's out of sorts," she said. "By an' by pretty soon dat young gent 'll be round here hisself, den he'll make it all right."

"No, no, he's gone; it's my luck," said the man, flinging himself sullenly into a chair, "and I swear I'll make somebody dance for it if it don't change soon. Look here, Soubette, you know Meg and me work together, and she's been going into conniptions over a new kid she found, just the face to make money in any line with, she said, and the little goose gave her the slip and got off, leaving her in a terrible state. Then here's my duck flown and my plans smashed too. Curse the whole kit of 'em, I say; but my pictur'-painter ain't in such luck as he thinks for, that's one comfort; he's got to come back, for he can't prove a word without *the paper*, and that's out of his reach any way."

"Where is it?" asked the old man in quite an eager voice. "There is nothing like confidence, my friend. Where is it?"

"It is all right," Jim replied, with a loud laugh, "and you ain't got it, that's the best of it. I wouldn't trust you a minute if you had, you old French sinner."

Then the man got up and stretched himself, with a yawn, coming so near the double doors of the doctor's hiding place—which communicated equally with both rooms—that Heatherton heard him as plainly as if he spoke in his ear.

"I've got the trick in my own hand so far," he said, "for I'm the only one who can establish his identity by *the paper*, and what would your claim amount to without that? If you're hiding him, Soubette, you can't play off on me, and so I tell you you only waste time. I want to quit the country as well as you do, and if I can get a fair price, I'll sell out to-morrow, but no one shall rob me, and so I tell you."

To this he added something about believing that the Frenchman's illness was only a sham to hide some plot then in progress. He repeated his threat, with many embellishing oaths, and swaggered out of the room and the house.

Then Rosetta soothed her master and quieted him in her own peculiar fashion, and having succeeded, closed the door between the rooms and opened the slide behind which Heatherton was stationed.

With her finger on her lip, she led the way to the front door, begging the doctor in a low tone to hurry round the square to where he had left his carriage and drive back in that, as if he had come to pay a visit.

"You have heard all dat talk, and you don't know what to make of it, I see. Well, dat was the young master's fix—his head was 'most turned wid all de secrets. But jes' you bring him back now, and old Rosie 'll tell him something dat no one ain't told him yet, and dat's de *whole truth*; sartin sure I will, you jes' find him, doctor."

"I will try to," said Heatherton, earnestly, and he would have stayed to say more, but the wily old woman warned him that Jim might return at any moment and find him there, and urged him to come back with his carriage and make his usual visit to disarm suspicion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. BLANCHARD'S EXPLANATION OF FACTS.

"What is the meaning of this, Marian?" Mrs. Barton asked, coming down-stairs nearly an hour later than the receipt of the scribbled note in the needle case.

She held a piece of written paper in her hand and looked in a confused and astonished way at her daughter, who had by this time recovered her consciousness and was holding her throbbing head between her hands, and half-reclining on the lounge to which she had raised herself.

Marian looked at her half vacantly for a moment, and then said, "I don't know, mother," and seemed to want to shrink away from the sight and sound of everything.

"Are you sick, child, or what is the matter with you?" questioned her mother, "I declare it's enough to turn any one's head to be among such a flighty set of children as mine," she continued in a fretful tone; "first one falls ill, and then another flies off somewhere, and now here are you looking like a ghost and trembling as if you had the ague."

"What is all this, good neighbor?" asked a sharp, inquisitive tone at the door and Mrs. Blanchard's smiling face followed her voice and presented itself before the mother and daughter with friendly nods and words of greeting. "You see, good people, how much I think of you, I came here to ask for Mr. Allan, and after ringing and tapping in vain, let myself in rather than go away unsatisfied."

Mrs. Barton began to apologise with her usual humility, but Mrs. Blanchard interrupted her in her own quick way.

"Something's wrong, what is it? Of course I can see it in our pretty Marian's pale face, and your startled air. You've had a surprise that took your hearing away and left me ringing and knocking till I was wearied; but it is your own business and I'll not intrude. Excuse me," and with these words Mrs. Blanchard made as though she would depart, but Mrs. Barton interfered with much obsequiousness of manner.

"Pray sit down, ma'am," she said, "and do us the favor of listening to Lucy's note; it is this which has alarmed us, for in it she says she's left the city, Mrs. Blanchard; and oh, I hope you'll give me your kind advice, ma'am, for I don't know what to make of it."

Marian crumpled the bit of paper she still held in her hand, and bit her lips until they were white. Every feeling in her nature rebelled against this woman's being consulted in this way, yet she dared not speak a word.

"See here," said her mother, reading the note, "this is what I found pinned on my cushion on the bureau up-stairs—

"'DEAR MOTHER, it is very hard for me to get paying work here, and I am forced to go away for a time. I am very unhappy, but I mean to do the very best that is left for me now, and can leave you more easily, knowing that Marian is the best daughter, as she has been the best sister in the world.

"'LUCY.'"

Marian scarcely listened to this reading, she knew already all it could tell, but she narrowly watched Mrs. Blanchard's face and tried to follow its changeful workings while Mrs. Barton bent over the words she was slow to decipher.

When she had concluded, her visitor's mind was evidently made up, for she laughed easily and said:

"Pshaw! what mysteries girls will make out of trifles! Now I'll tell you what it all means, neighbor Barton. Lucy was silly enough to become home-sick and leave her New York place before she had probably tried it. She regrets her folly, and according to my advice has gone back, but in place of an open sensible departure, she prefers this odd sort of flight. Well, well, it's all the same in the end, you know."

"But she never even told Marian," Mrs. Barton said with a puzzled face, "she never—"

Mrs. Blanchard knitted her brows angrily and brought her thin lips together with an impatient snap.

"I have given you the explanation I was bound to offer to set your minds at ease," she said, curtly, "but I do not undertake to answer further."

In the most subservient manner, Mrs. Barton hastened to change her words and expression of face.

"I'm deeply indebted to you, ma'am," she declared, "and you've certainly made us both feel very comfortable. I'm sure I look to you as my one friend and reliance, and I try to be grateful for all your—your—"

"There, never mind," interrupted the appeased visitor; "I want you to please bring me a direct bulletin from Mr. Allan, concerning his health; and give him this package of grapes, from me, while I wait."

With profuse thanks his mother received the fruit, and departed on her mission.

And then Mrs. Blanchard turned, with a keen look in her roving eyes, toward Marian, who had not uttered a sound throughout the interview.

"This is your only hope, my girl," said she, rapidly. "I have saved you from a world of trouble, and smoothed the way for anything that may follow. You know that you owe this to me, and resent the obligation—but you cannot help being my debtor, my pretty Marian; and your silence and hauteur are as vain as they are foolish."

Marian looked toward the door—there was no sign of her mother's return, and she took advantage of this moment to appeal to the woman she believed her evil genius.

"Why do you pursue us thus?" she implored, in a voice broken by the intensity of her feeling. "Why do you drive us from place to place, and interfere with every plan and effort we make to regain what is lost! What can two poor powerless girls like we are, have done to earn your anger and hatred? I know that you turned Mad. Tinzler against my sister; I know that you have established a miserable influence over my poor dear mother; and I see that you here to-night are bent on governing us all. Oh, leave us, I entreat you, I implore you—for your work is all for evil, and your pleasure seems to be in other's pain!"

Mrs. Blanchard listened to this disjointed adjuration with a smile on her lips; and when it was ended, she reached forward her prettily gloved hand and tried to tap the speaker's glowing cheek.

"People sometimes do not know their best friend, my love," she said; "and I see you are determined to be blind to yours. The fact is, I am deeply interested in you, my pretty Miss Marian—*something you said once, awoke the most intense feeling of curiosity as to your future, my dear, and I mean to trace it out, if possible.*"

Mrs. Barton returned at that moment. Allan was much better, and so grateful for the delicious grapes; he sent unnumbered thanks to his good and noble friend, who in her own splendor, found time to remember the sick, &c. And Mrs. Barton, whose devotion to her old neighbor seemed to grow in eloquent-expression, followed her, bowing, and smiling, and thanking, to the door, where her carriage was drawn up and waiting.

"Remember, dear Miss Marian," she said, nodding and smiling at the silent girl, as she took her leave and swept down the steps in her rich drapery.

A stout, common-looking woman, in a black dress and bonnet, rather jostled against her just as she was about to enter her carriage, but Mrs. Blanchard was too fully occupied with the faces she left behind her, to notice the one that instead of making a humble apology, peered closely into hers with something very like a mocking grin upon it, as the rude woman went sauntering on her way.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AGAIN ENSNARED.

The person who had so unceremoniously run against the lady, on her way to her carriage, kept walking forward quite undisturbed by compunctions at her want of civility.

Occasionally she winked, for her own amusement apparently, and screwed up her mouth into an absurd expression of internal enjoyment.

From the steady nature of her movements and the resolution in her small, gray eyes, it was apparent, to a close observer, that this female was engaged in carrying out a fixed plan, and awaited its result with some anxiety. Three times did she walk round the same square, each time with increasing impatience, that suddenly changed to satisfaction at the sight of a tall, dark man in a travelling-cap and cloak, who called to her familiarly as he came up.

"Well, Mother Meg, you're up to time, and a little earlier, too, I see."

"Why yes, Ralph," answered the woman, who was indeed Meg Worthy, of Todd's crib and other dubious localities; "when business is meant, I'm generally on sharp time—and lucky for me that I am so early too."

"How's that?" asked the man, carelessly, he being a person seldom interested in any but selfish ends.

"Why, I chanced to meet an old friend of yours. I ran against her, in fact, and almost knocked myself down over her carriage steps—*her carriage steps*—think of that!"

"Whose carriage steps?" asked Ralph, becoming more alive to the subject.

"Her's; your old flame's, Nina, the Frenchman's daughter."

"Where was she?" the fellow asked, eagerly, now thoroughly roused; "did she know you? did she speak?"

As her companion grew more and more eager, Meg, who understood his disposition pretty well, suddenly became cool.

"That isn't business," she said, shortly, "and it is business only that I came for. You let some words drop last night before Jim that gave me a clue I mean to follow up. You said you could wind that girl I picked up out of the river, round your fingers; say, now, didn't you?"

"Well, what then? I shouldn't take the trouble unless something was to come of it; and this girl's nothing to me now, you know."

"Yes, but she is to me; I want her, and I will make it worth the trouble—aye, a dozen, dozen times, if you bring her back."

Mrs. Worthy spoke with earnestness, bordering on vehemence, and caught the arm of her companion with an emphatic pressure to mark her words.

"Come, I'll be frank, old mother, and save trouble," Ralph said, after a little consideration on his part. "I'm tired of adventure, and want rest. I'm on a game now that must yield well; it's bound to do it; and after this trick's won, I'll throw up my hand, and lay idle for the rest of my life. I'll say good-bye to old scenes, and begin anew in other lands, and all that, you understand—"

"But your trick isn't won, nor is your hand full yet," cried the woman, eagerly; "you want help, and I can help you."

"How, and in what way?" demanded the man, with increasing eagerness.

She looked all round her to see that they were unobserved, and then whispered in his ear:

"I'll bring you face to face with your game. I know where the boy is. Ha, I thought that would start you! I'll do more still. I'll help you in every way I can, and they are many."

"You've guessed my secret," confessed Ralph, hurriedly. "Yes, I want a haul at the De Courcy money; Nina owes it to me, and if she weren't as bold and hard as granite, I would attack her publicly, and demand my share of the wealth that she has smuggled so coolly into her own pouch. But I must get a gag, you understand; something with which I can stop her mouth while I make terms. I must find where a certain little paper that I know of is now kept."

"Yes, yes," said Mother Worthy, impatiently. "You want to discover something that will frighten her, by proving she's as much in your power as you are in hers. Then, instead of giving you up to be lagged for your many little adventures, she'll shell out some of her coins, &c. Yes, yes; yes, yes;" and she nodded her head and winked leeringly, to prove that she thoroughly understood his game.

Ralph watched her with some displeasure.

"Don't be so dash, old woman," he returned, gruffly. "Remember, you're not dealing with that ruffian, Jim. No, curse me, I'm a gentleman, and no cut-throat or housebreaker!"

"I know," she answered, with a bitter laugh; "that means you're a coward, and do nothing openly. When you wanted bold work done, we always had to do it for you. Don't bring any bragging airs here to me, Ralph Velour," she broke out, with sudden sharpness. "Confound you, I know you too well. Don't call names, or I'll split on the sneak that knocked a girl down and robbed her of a locket, the other night."

These last words she uttered close to his ear, and with her eye upon him. They told well; he changed his usual olive hue for a dull and ugly white, and started as if he felt a hand on his shoulder ready to arrest him for the deed.

"Ha, ha," thought Mrs. Worthy, "then it was true what I heard little Pat tell Moll about him; so so, I can make terms with him now."

"You see that was a bit of fun," Ralph confessed, trying to laugh. "I saw the girl walking under a gaslight with a gold locket in her hand that I knew at a glance was the one holding a bit of paper of great importance to me—and I nabbed it, that's all. I didn't find the paper though," he muttered, after a moment's pause, "if I had I wouldn't be wasting time here with you."

Mrs. Worthy stood still and remained silent for a moment, though her hand grasped his arm and her face worked with the depth and ardor of her thoughts meantime.

"I have it, Ralph, and it's like magic, it comes out so strong and clear. I knew you were the one to bring that girl back to me, because you have more to gain by finding her even than I have. See here, I know about your getting that locket by locking down the girl who, as you are aware, is Lucy's sister. Well, that locket I hooked myself just for a game. I cut it off a guard and belt fixings to show Jim that I understood his trade as well as he did, but I never stopped to look at the lady I hooked it from, and knowing no value in the thing I gave it to Lucy for a present. She must have taken out the paper you can't find, and when you bring her to me we'll make her tell all about it and get it for you just as easy as winking. Don't be afraid of burdening yourself with her. I'll take her off your hands, and you can mizzle as soon as your job's done."

She said this with breathless haste, and seemed quite triumphant in her plan. Ralph too appeared to enjoy it; his wicked eyes glittered, and he rubbed his hands together with an air of satisfaction, till a sudden and disagreeable thought changed his mood somewhat.

"Meg," he said, in a low and reluctant tone, "I—I—that is she—curse it, I'm ashamed to tell you, but I was fool enough to marry the little wretch at a country place last spring nearly a year ago, and she has the proof in writing, though she swore she would not tell it till I gave her leave."

At this confession the woman burst into a hoarse laugh.

"As if this was news to me, Ralph Velour, you shallow ninny," she cried; "why the idiot of a girl buried a copy of her marriage certificate with the dead-born child—and I saw it. Ha, ha, ha!"

It was getting late, and after a little more conversation, carried on after this last disclosure in a lower and much more confidential tone, these two worthy friends parted.

The woman scuttled away in a hurry, as she had promised to meet her pal, Jim, in a short time at Todd's, but the man lounged on without any definiteness of purpose just where his fancy happened to lead him, until he found himself at last in front of a large lighted doorway, surrounded by carriages, wagons and hurrying people. It was the depot of a railroad running north, and his half-formed plan of leaving the city in pursuit of Mrs. Blanchard's son, the artist, recurred to him.

He had lately discovered a faint clue to the young gentleman's whereabouts, that he had almost decided to follow—but Meg's story threw all that out of the way—if he could get the paper, that would be better than making terms with the boy. The paper was the thing, yes, that it was!

As his thoughts ran in this way, a slender figure closely veiled and in deep mourning, passed him hurriedly and passed into the station.

At the door it was forced to pause a moment to avoid the crowd coming out, and there his eyes followed it after a first identifying glance.

"Is it?" he thought, rendered uncertain for a moment by the mourning garments. "Yes, it must be; by all the furies, the little fool has thrown herself right into my hands!"

Her veil had caught in some projection of the door as she endeavored to pass. She drew it aside hastily, and showed the pale and tear-worn face of Lucy Barton. It was only for a single instant, but that one moment sealed her fate, the next Ralph Velour's hand was on her arm and his voice in her ear whispered:

"Lucy, my own dear wife! after all this waiting and wandering, I have found you at last!"

CHAPTER XXV.

MARIAN BEGINS AGAIN IN A NEW SPHERE.

The morning after Lucy's disappearance, Marian started early to the cloak and mantilla store, for there was no time to be lost in idle grieving, let her heart be as heavy as it might.

In her uncertainty and distress as to her sister's fate, and amid the wretched fears and misgivings that haunted her, she was painfully jarred by her mother's strange credulity and satisfaction.

Mrs. Barton had not only adopted Mrs. Blanchard's hints as positive facts, but had eked them out to suit her wishes, and so considered the question settled.

"I believe now that Lucy always intended to go back to New York," she said to Marian, as they sat together over their early and cheerless breakfast, "she kept putting off sending for her trunk, and seemed to get more and more dissatisfied with her work here. Now, what I think, is, that she spoke to Mrs. Blanchard about it, and asked advice; indeed, Mrs. Blanchard said as much last night. Then she must have offered to lend Lucy the money to go with, and they decided between them to do it quietly. Oh, of course, that's the way it all happened, and we will soon have a letter from our girl, telling us all about it."

Marian said nothing, although it distressed her to see her mother so easily led and managed. She had not the heart to undeceive her by a recital of the painful truth; so, choking down her own troubled feeling, she hurried off to secure her new place.

As she drew near the establishment, her recollection of the lady's decided and rather severe manner, made her timid of returning without the ally she had promised, but there was no choice for it, and after an instant of irresolution Marian entered the store.

The proprietress was busy cutting out material on a side counter, and did not look up for a moment or two, so Marian said—

"If you please, ma'am, I came according to the agreement yesterday."

Then the store-keeper raised her eyes and looked all over the shrinking girl, who changed color and trembled despite every effort to the contrary.

"Are you the one who promised without fail, to bring your sister?"

"Yes, ma'am, but—"

"Then why didn't you do it?"

"She couldn't come with me. I did not see her—that is—I mean to say—she had been obliged to go away—"

"Oh, bother," said the woman, sharply, "why can't you tell the truth at once, and say you had no sister." Then, without regard to Marian's attempt to speak in defence of her veracity, she went on. "It's just the way with you all—you can't keep from lying, even when there's no temptation, and the truth's easier to tell, as it was in your case. I'm heartily sick of it. And I've solemnly declared that I'll get girls around me, whose word I can depend on, even if I have to break up my business trying. I expect to pay good wages for good work, and give fair treatment in return for decent character—but bad sewers and liars are alike plenty. I can't get a girl that I can depend on for an hour at a time; and I can't trust your faces either, that's the worst of it. When I saw you looking in at that window yesterday, I said to myself, 'there's a truthful face,' and so I beckoned to you on the chance of your being out of work; but you're like the rest, and they're all bad enough, bad enough!"

Marian had made several attempts to defend herself, for the woman really seemed kinder and better than her short, irascible manner indicated, and she would have been very thankful to have gained employment under her, but she was at once provoked and voluble, and kept on denouncing all false, prevaricating girls, and lamenting her misfortune in coming in contact with them, without regard to poor Marian's plea.

At length she turned toward her suddenly. "You've worked somewhere else, I suppose," she said. "Yes, I thought so, and now you go there, wherever it is, and get yourself a recommendation, only a line will do, and bring it here to me. Then we'll talk of business; but I can't have a word till you bring me that, for you see I was deceived by your innocent looks, and I want something better than guess work now."

Marian paused a moment, but the woman taking up the pile of circulars she had cut out, passed out of the store into an adjoining work-room, and so she felt that the interview was at an end.

Of course she could not go back to Miss Gauzewell nor Madame Tinzler after leaving them as she had done; there was no hope for her now but trying Mr. Pandar at the fancy store, so she walked around until it was nine o'clock, and then with a sinking heart and faltering courage presented herself before a large, highly-colored woman, very much overdressed, who stood behind the magnificent show-case on Mr. Pandar's counter.

"I applied here yesterday for the place of saleswoman," Marian said, addressing the female, "and the gentleman told me to come to-day at this time."

"He did, did he?" returned the woman, rather snappishly, "then he may come and attend to his own business, that's all I've got to say. Pandar, somebody wants you!"

Without looking toward Marian, she turned her head in the direction of an arched and ornamental opening leading to some inner apartment, and bawled out the last short sentence for the benefit of some invisible person there.

Obedient to the summons came the same gentleman who had talked with Marian the day before, who said, "Aha!" when he saw her, and then turning to his companion asked in a low confidential tone—

"Well, Sophie, what do you say, eh?"

"I didn't know you wanted a figure for a mourning store," said Sophie, shortly.

"No, no, certainly not," Mr. Pandar answered quickly; "but that's only the outside. There's a great deal to be done in trimming up and beautifying: but the real material, just look at it, Sophie, and you'll acknowledge it's first-class."

At this the woman grew more snappish than before, and without once glancing toward Marian, who was blushing and disconcerted under the cool stare of the man, observed that she "wasn't fond of white wax or baby faces, and didn't believe they took with customers either."

"You don't see," persisted Mr. Pandar. "I call it real beauty and no mistake."

"Then you'd better get it, and let me go since I don't suit," cried the other angrily; "if I've lost my looks you'd better get some one of a different sort to take my place, though I'll take the trouble to remind you that I made your business, and can break it, too, if I've a mind to—"

"Pshaw, Sophie, what *are* you thinking of," cried Mr. Pandar, cajolingly, "I couldn't keep open an hour without you, and so I've told you a thousand times; but you need help, and you want a contrast in the girl that stands beside you. I couldn't get your match, there isn't such another splendid queen of a woman as Miss Sophie Gimper to be had for money, but I thought such a pale, slender sort of girl as this one, would only be a set-off to you, and increase your charm."

Mr. Pandar's words fell like oil on the waters of Miss Gimper's troubled vanity, and she condescended after some reluctance to admit that, to them that fancied washed-out beauties, the young un might appear well enough."

"Of course she's nothing as she is," continued Mr. Pandar, eagerly following up this concession, "but you could make her quite smart and presentable if you took a little trouble with her; indeed, she's bound to learn if she stays with you a little while, because I do say that you know the art of fixing up, and understand how to take people's fancies better than any other girl I ever saw, Sophie."

After this gallant speech, Miss Gimper could do no less than yield her objections, and accordingly she moved toward Marian and said aloud, pointing to an opening at the side of the counter—

"Come round here, miss, and Mr. Pandar will talk to you about what he expects a saleswoman to do."

Then turning to the proprietor, she said—

"If she suits, she may as well begin at once, as the cases are to be all fixed up, and the windows, too, this week."

Mr. Pandar nodded, and nodding to Marian to follow him, he entered a room at the back of the store, fitted up with a desk and chairs. Seating himself, he motioned to her to follow his example, and entered on business at once.

"You heard what Miss Gimper said about the value of appearance in our line of business?" asked he.

Marian shook her head. She had caught fragments of their conversation, but believing that they meant it to be private, had endeavored to abstract her attention as much as possible.

"I suppose it is necessary to be neat and presentable in every business," she ventured to say.

"Yes; but we like to have things bright and attractive," Mr. Pandar continued; "we keep a stylish, gay-looking store, everything in it got up to strike the eye and awaken the admiration. Attract is the word with us; it pays, and we want to have everything to correspond, you understand?"

"Yes;" Marian said, rather hesitatingly, but looked at him inquiringly; waiting for further elucidation.

"You see Miss Gimper's style, that's what I mean," said Mr. Pandar, evidently at a loss for similes. "She makes the most of herself, and is striking and attractive in consequence. Now, what we want of you is, that you shall do the same; dress up, wear ribbons, curls, laces, jewelry, and pile on the agony—you understand?"

"Scarcely," Marian said, with still greater hesitation. She looked at her black dress, and tears came into her eyes. "I have just lost my father," she said, in a faltering voice, "and I do not believe you could ask me to put those outrageous ornaments on under the circumstances. I am very anxious to get employment; we are poor, and it is positively necessary that I should make my living, but I trust you will allow me to prove my efficiency in some other way. I will do my best, and try very hard to give satisfaction; indeed, indeed I will."

"Humph," said Mr. Pandar, and he seemed to think deeply for a minute or two, then he clapped his knees and muttered, "By George, I'll try it."

His excitable manner quite startled Marian, but she watched him attentively and inwardly prayed that he might take her as she was, thus giving her an opportunity to work for her needy family.

"I'm going to try you as you are, do you see?" cried Mr. Pandar; "there's something quite taking about the mourning and paleness and all that, it's a new dodge, and I'm going to try it on, just by way of contrast to Sophie, who is rather red and stout, though you'd better not let her hear you say so. But if I'm obliged to make a change in the programme you've got to come into it, young 'un, for we are bound to make this shop take in all particulars and this is only an experiment."

Marian was not able to pick and choose her employment, and though she did not like the man or woman's manner, the work seemed easy, and the salary, as it presently transpired, was excellent, far more than she had ever received before, and nearly equal to what Lucy and she had earned together.

This great consideration weighed heavily with her, because it helped those at home; she was willing to stifle her objections and overcome her prejudices so long as she could set her mother's mind at ease and provide for her sick brother. Her father's employers had helped them at his death, by partly securing their house rent until Allan should graduate; and the sum offered by Mr. Pandar, together with some odd jobs of sewing her mother and she did in after hours from the trimming store, would pay the remainder of it and keep them all in food.

Knowing this, she was almost ready to agree to anything—and after a little more whispering between Mr. Pandar and Miss Gimper, and a slight renewal of objection on that lady's part, Marian was by her inducted into service, and immediately set about cleaning out and arranging the cases.

Here her natural industry, taste and neatness came to her aid, and made the task a light one, soon and satisfactorily concluded.

The windows came next, and were accomplished with equal dispatch and nicety, so that Miss Gimper herself was won to approval, and remarked—

"Well, as far as work goes, you're first rate—but that's the small half here. Morning's our busy time; afternoon brings out the gents, our customers, and then comes the tug of trial. Here is the boy with my lunch from the restaurant. I'll share it with you to-day—and then you can make up your mind about bringing or buying yours to-morrow. Don't stand talking; sit down and eat—you're welcome, and you must be tired."

Thanking her new acquaintance for her hospitable kindness, Marian complied.

She was indeed quite weary, for she had been working under the impulse of excitement; a bright glow reddened her cheek, and her eyes sparkled brilliantly.

"You're not bad-looking, my dear," said Miss Gimper, noting this added color. "When I show you how to rig your hair up high in front, and dress it with ribbons

and French jewelry, you'll be almost as handsome as I am. Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Gimper seemed to enjoy this idea immensely, and so Marian tried to look pleased and smiled also, controlling her shrinking aversion at the woman's familiarity and coarseness by remembering her own necessities and the value of her place.

After luncheon Miss Gimper retired to the inner room, where she brushed and twisted her hair and arranged all her adornments over and over again, while Marian remained at the counter and sold a few articles of perfumery, &c., that were called for.

Presently, as the afternoon wore on, the store began to fill up with gayly dressed gentlemen, all more or less familiar with her companion, who called for gloves, handkerchiefs, cravats, and all sorts of fancy articles, which they chatted over and laughed about, and finally bought.

Marian had scarcely time to note a strong mixture of familiarity, boldness, cajolery and coquetry that characterized her companion's manner toward these purchasers, before her own time and attention were fully occupied with those who preferred to be waited on by her.

They were not a few, and she would have been quite elated by her success as a saleswoman, had it not been for a painful consciousness of freedom of manner on the part of the men who dealt with her.

Busy as she was, and concentrated as her attention necessarily needed to be, she could not help overhearing their bold inquiries concerning her, nor catching Miss Gimper's invariable reply—

"Oh, she's a new fancy of Pandar's, he's bound to find out which one of you is weak on the delicate white rosebud kind of beauty. Ha, ha, ha!"

(*To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 3.*)

DAYS OF OLD.

BY ASTLEY H. BALDWIN.

All the forest glows with crimson, all the sky is barred with gold,
And the glinting of the gloaming is a fair sight to behold;
But brighter than the sunset, fairer than crimsoned tree,
The memories of bygone days, as they come back to me.

For, walking by the river—on the winding river bank,
Where the pike lies 'mid the rushes, and the reeds grow green and rank,
Where the moorhen skims the surface, leaving silver in her track—
To the days of love and Springtime does fond Fancy bear me back.

When I plucked the water-lilies for a fair girl, as we walked,
And the nightingale sang pæans to us lovers as we talked—
When the breeze that stirred the poplars music seemed to us of bliss—
When the ring-doves on the pine-tops taught our willing lips to kiss.

Oh! golden is the heart-glow that waits on love and Spring,
When cloudless seems our Summer and rose-hued everything:
There is not in life's Autumn half so sweet a story told
As the dear old tale of May-time, happy, happy tale of old!

CLAUDIA'S TRIUMPH.

BY CLEMENTINE MONTAGU,

"AUTHOR OF "THE COST OF CONQUEST," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN AWKWARD RENCONTRE.

EMILIA—But jealous minds will not be answered so—
They are not even jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous; 'tis a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself.
DESDEMONA—Heaven keep that monster from Othello's mind.
EMILIA—Lady, amen!

—*Shakspeare.*

Lady Nortonshall could not forget the insult she fancied she had received from the actress or Frank, or both combined, for she could not conceive that her letter could by any possibility have miscarried; and she judged that he no longer cared for the interest she took in his welfare and happiness.

"He is cold and heartless," she said to herself, when all hope of hearing from him was at an end, "and thinks me bold and unwomanly for having written to him at all. He is like all the world—there is no one to care for me now—not one—not one!"

Mrs. Eversfield was seriously annoyed at her fitful spirits and worn, harassed look. She knew nothing of the letter which had been written, but she associated poor Alma's depression with the story of Frank Vavasour's accident, and was proportionately angry with her for it.

"I am utterly and thoroughly ashamed of you, Alma," she said to her one night, after her triste looks had been the subject of remark from more than one person.

"Why, aunt?"

"Why, aunt! As if you did not know! I think my Lady Nortonshall might have more pride than to go moping about like a love-sick school-girl for the sake of a man who is not her husband, and who—"

"Oh, aunt!"

"Oh, you may exclaim and look as sentimental as you please—it's the truth, you know. Let me finish what I was going to say—"

"You have said quite enough."

"Who does not care for her, was the conclusion of my sentence. Have you no spirit left that you let every one see that Lord Nortonshall's wife cannot repress her feelings for her old lover even in society?"

"Lord Nortonshall's wife is moping for no man but her husband, madam!" Alma retorted, indignantly. "You are hard to me—most hard and cruel!" she continued, after a pause. "Have I not cause to look sad? What wife in all Paris would endure what I do, hour after hour, and day after day, and not complain? Do you think it is nothing to me to hear my husband's name coupled with this woman's in terms which no wife should listen to? Is it not enough that I am left alone to die, for aught he cares, while he is by *her* side whispering of love into her ears that have, perhaps, listened to the same tale from the lips of hundreds of men?"

"It is enough to bear, Alma; but if you showed the spirit you should it would not be so much."

"No; perhaps not. You would have me dance when my heart lies like lead in my bosom, laugh when my tears are choking me, be gay and festive when the memory of my misery sends a stab through me with every breath I draw. That is the fashionable way of showing *spirit*, is it not? I can do it, but there comes an end to it, thank Heaven! Such a struggle cannot last long—it ends in one of three ways."

"How?"

"Either the spirited creature becomes a callous, heartless, sinful woman, lost to all sense of self-respect or the respect of her fellow creatures, or she goes mad, or dies. One of the two last will be my fate!"

"I do believe you are mad already. Oh, if my poor brother had only let me have *my* way in bringing you up, you would have been more tractable now."

"I should have been a model woman, I have no doubt—a girl without a heart, a wife without soul or feeling—an automaton! Perhaps it would have been best if my father had not fostered the love that was in my nature; but you see, aunt, he did not intend me for a fashionable wife or a worldly woman."

"No; his romantic notions have spoiled you," remarked Mrs. Eversfield, dryly.

"Stop!" exclaimed Alma, passionately. "Not a word of that sort! Whatever he taught me was right, my dear, kind, honored father. Oh, that I were lying by his side now at Westerpark! Oh, father, father, that I might die and be at peace with you!"

"Hush, Alma! hush!" said Mrs. Eversfield, as her niece burst into passionate tears. "It is all for the best, some way, depend upon it."

But it was in vain she tried to soothe Alma now. There was ample reason for grief. She had enough to bear, poor young wife.

Her husband's career in London, and his studied neglect of her, were subjects openly discussed; and many persons put an utterly wrong construction on the matter, and chose to assume that some misconduct on Lady Nortonshall's own part had caused this separation, and treated her accordingly.

But for Mrs. Eversfield she would have secluded herself altogether from society, and so given color to the reports which were set afloat. She did not care; she wanted to be left alone to "mope," as her aunt had it. It was her husband's will that she should stay abroad, and her earnest wish to return to England, and more than all to Westerpark.

"If I could only be there once more," she said to her aunt, "I would be content to stay there all my life. I don't care for gayety. He is welcome to do as he will. Oh, aunt, do you think he will let me go there?"

"You forget Westerpark is let," Mrs. Eversfield replied. "You cannot turn your tenants out for a whim like that. I have no doubt Nortonshall Castle will be at your service, if you so particularly fancy the country."

"Not that part of the country," she said, sadly. "Nortonshall is very lovely, and every one there was very kind to me; but it is not home."

"I don't know where a wife's home should be, but in her husband's house," said Mrs. Eversfield, snappishly. "You are quite idiotic about Westerpark, Alma. You couldn't expect to stay there all your life."

She little thought how soon they would both see Westerpark, and under what circumstances.

Only two days after the above conversation a letter came, addressed to Alma in a hand she did not know. The postmark was London, and when she opened it an enclosed letter dropped out. It was from her husband's lawyer, and was very brief.

"LONDON, Sept. 18th.

"MADAM—The enclosed was received at Lord Nortonshall's temporary town residence this morning. His lordship has left London without leaving any address, so I deemed it best, as the letter is marked '*Immediate*,' and has already been to Nortonshall Castle, to forward it to your ladyship at once. I do not imagine Lord Nortonshall's absence from town will be of any duration, as he left no orders of any sort with his servants. Perhaps you may have seen him. I have the honor to be your ladyship's obedient servant,

"CHARLES BLAIR.

"Lady Nortonshall."

The enclosure was a dirty, untidy looking letter, written on coarse paper, and sealed with the end of a key. It was addressed in a sprawling, almost illegible hand to "*Lady Nortonshall, Nortonshall Castle, Yorkshire*," and was nearly a week old.

Alma opened it in fear and trembling, for the postmark was that of the nearest town to Westerpark. Her fears were considerably allayed when she saw the inside, which was in a totally different writing to the address, and was scarcely legible.

The name at the end told her nothing, "Job Smith" being apparently the writer of the letter, and it was some time before she could make out its meaning.

"WESTERPARK LODGE, Wensday.

"HONORED MISS OR MADAM—This comes hopping as your ladyship will excuse the liberty as I have took in riting to you, on account of James Hodgson took bad with the rumatiz, and not abel at this time of asken to hold a pen. Honored miss, James's wife is now lying on her dying bed—leastways, 'tis so thought by all as knows—and will never rise no more; and, my lady, James says will you come and see her, or send some one you can trust, for she 'ave something on 'er mind to tell you. My lady, we as is with her thinks she is raving but James he doesn't, for she is always talking of the night when your honored ladyship's father was killed, and she do say she won't tell it to no one but you and another party, as James says I'm not to mention in this letter. Honored miss, she do be always calling and crying out for you, and isn't to be quieted nohow, and if so be as you could but condescend to come and see her, she would die easy, and maybe you would hear something as well. James he sends his humbel dooty, and hopes your honor is well, and I 'umbly 'ope so, too. James will put his mark to this, so as you may kno' I rit it with his word to it. Honoured madam, I am your ladyship's 'umble servant,

"JOB SMITH,

"Under gamekeeper at Westerpark,
"JAMES HODGSON † (his mark.)"

Lady Nortonshall handed the letter to Mrs. Eversfield, who perused it in silence.

"What shall we do, aunt?"

"Do, child? Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"No! What's the use? I fancy the whole thing is an imposture. If this old woman were really ill, depend upon it she would have told the clergyman, and he would have written to you."

"Imposture or not, I shall go."

"Go?"

"Yes."

"What, all the way to Westerpark on such an errand as that?"

"I would go to the end of the world to hear a breath that could throw any light on what he speaks of."

"You must be out of your mind, Alma, to dream of such a thing. It is work for the police, not for a young lady."

Alma's eyes blazed with defiant scorn as she turned upon her aunt.

"I loved my father," she said, "and I shall go to see this woman who raves about the night he died. Poor old Hannah—she was a faithful servant; I am sorry she is so ill. I will lose no chance of finding out anything about that awful mystery."

"But, Alma, do think—do stop to consider what you are going to do—what the consequences may be. Your husband—"

"May do as he likes; I shall go to Westerpark. If you do not choose to go with me, I shall go alone."

"I shall not let you do that, mad as I think your project, when there are lawyers in the land to be had for money. You shall not go scouring the country by yourself in that way. You would be talked of more than ever if you took such a rash step."

"I don't care what people say. I'm sick of having other people's opinions dinned into my ears. I shall go, let the world say what it likes. I can take no harm. Poor Frank is not at Westerpark that the place is to be tabooed as though the plague were there."

"You are perfectly indecent in the way you talk of him," Mrs. Eversfield said, angrily. "Have your own way. When will you go?"

"To-night."

"To-morrow morning will do just as well, will it not?"

"Hannah may be dead, if we delay. No, aunt, I will lose no time."

"She may be dead already, for the matter of that; but do as you please. You had better ring and give your orders. My maid will put up all that is necessary for me in a very short time. I don't think Lord Nortonshall—"

"I am quite prepared to answer to him for all my actions. It would be well if his could stand investigating as easily. Do not let us call him in question over this matter. My duty in this instance is to my father's memory, not to him."

"It's no use to say a word," Mrs. Eversfield returned, gloomily. "Go headlong into whatever mischief you like, for me."

She made no further opposition, except to express her feelings by shrugs and grunts, while the necessary preparations were being made for their hurried journey, and melancholy forebodings of how her health would suffer from her tremendous responsibility, and the fatigues of her position.

Alma was determined, she could see that, and she could only hope that no harm would come of this unexpected flight.

By night they were ready, and were soon speeding across the country to Calais, there to take the first boat that served. They arrived in London fagged and weary enough; but Alma would not rest.

"There would be plenty of time to sleep," she said, "when they had seen old Hannah."

So they started from King's-cross by the first train for the north.

As the train moved slowly out of the station, Lady Nortonshall, to her intense surprise, saw her husband standing on the edge of the platform looking at her.

His face seemed to be perfectly convulsed with rage, and his lips moved as though he were speaking to her, although she could hear no sound.

CHAPTER XX.

DYING.

Into the silent land!
Ah, who shall lead us thither?
Clouds in the evening sky more darkly gather,
And shattered wrecks lie thickly on the strand.
Who leads us with a gentle hand,
Thither—oh, thither,
Into the silent land.

—*Longfellow (from the German.)*

Mrs. Eversfield was the first to speak after the train was clear of the station. Alma was too much surprised at the sight of her husband when she least expected him, and too much alarmed at the expression of anger and ferocity on his countenance, to have words to utter for a few minutes, though she turned very pale, and trembled visibly.

"Mischief will come of this, Alma," her aunt said; "I know it will."

"What mischief can come of it, aunt? I am doing no harm."

"Maybe not, but Nortonshall thinks you are. I could see it in his face. Can he be following us, do you think?"

"If he is, he will have his journey for nothing. Even his unjust suspicions could find no harm in what I am doing now. I think he was at King's-cross on some other errand than looking for us."

"I hope so, I am sure, but the expression of his face as he looked at you seemed to bode no good."

"Ah, it was frightful!" said Alma, with a shudder; "but I think—I hope—it was some other cause that made him so savage. He cannot have got the letter I sent him."

"That's true," Mrs. Eversfield replied. "He cannot know of our journey, and yet how are we to account for his presence there?"

"Don't try," Alma said.

"I can't help it, my dear; I feel worried about it."

"I shan't worry over it," her niece said. "His lordship has long left off allowing me any interest in his doings. I suppose he was after some of his own evil business."

The conversation dropped with the last remark.

Poor Lady Nortonshall! She was trying to harden herself into the belief that she did not care about what her husband did, or where he went; but the attempt was a complete failure. She was as utterly and entirely afraid of her heartless lord and master as it was possible for any broken-spirited wife to be, and the idea of his taking umbrage at her journey made her shrink and shiver with a strange fear. It was very late in the day when they arrived at the nearest station to Westerpark, and when the few miles' drive which they had to take to reach the village was over, twilight was beginning to close in—a red autumn twilight, making everything glow like gold with its red radiance.

Mrs. Eversfield took apartments at the village inn, dignified by the name of hotel—the same inn from which Lord Nortonshall had gone to London to see Claudia Wynne's first appearance—and she declared her intention of going then and there to bed, she was so fatigued with her journey.

"I must see Hannah before I sleep," her niece replied, "but I need not keep you up, aunt."

"Oh, let Hannah be till morning! Child, you will kill yourself if you go on like this; you've not been to bed for the last two nights, and now you want to be off again. Let it be till the morning!"

"She may die before then, auntie. No; I'll see her to-night."

"As you will; only, for goodness sake, have some tea first. I'm worn out, if you are not."

"I need not drag you out, aunt—one of the servants will see me to old Hodgson's cottage. It's the lodge nearest here, you know, not two hundred yards from the door here, and the old man will bring me back. They'll only be too proud to escort me. I cannot rest till I have heard what they can tell about that dreadful night. Perhaps it is something that will help us to find out."

"I am as anxious as ever you can be, though I know you think me an unfeeling wretch; but I utterly disbelieve the whole story. However, ring the bell for tea, and we will inquire whether old Hannah is really as ill as they say."

The waiter who appeared in answer to the summons, only too glad to wait on Mrs. Eversfield and "Miss Alma," as the country people still persisted in calling Lady Nortonshall, stated that Hannah Hodgson was really dying, at least the doctor had so stated, and that the report was rife in the village that she could not live many hours, and that she would have been dead before, but that she had that on her mind which would not let her depart in peace.

"What superstitious rubbish," Mrs. Eversfield said, when the door closed behind the waiter. "The poor old soul has just taken some delirious fancy into her head, and imagines all sorts of things. Depend upon it, Alma, she knows no more than any one else of this wretched affair."

"Whether or no, I shall see her to-night; but, auntie, I will not take you, you are quite knocked up."

"Indeed I am—it has been a dreadful journey."

"Well, then, just go to bed, and make yourself comfortable, or at any rate, lie down. I will not be away a minute longer than I can help."

Mrs. Eversfield really was very tired, and she never imagined that any harm could come to Alma, unless from the overdelight of the village people at seeing her, so she consented to what had been proposed—viz., that one of the inn servants should see her to the lodge, and bring her back, if necessary.

Her niece saw her comfortably established on a soft sofa by a bright fire, and sallied forth, accompanied by a neat country girl, who remembered her well, and was only too proud to accompany her.

How familiar the little village street looked as she went along, the lights beginning to twinkle from the cottage windows, and the children twinkling about the doors.

Nearly every one she saw remembered her, and rustic bows and courtesies greeted her on all sides. The old gamekeeper was nearly beside himself with delight when he saw her.

"I knowed you'd come, Miss Alma," he said; "I knowed you'd come, if so be you got the letter as was wrote."

"I only got it two days since," she replied, shaking hands with the old man. "It came to Paris to me."

"Paris!" and James Hodgson looked at once bewildered and scared, for his ideas of geography were rather limited. "Sure that be a long way off, miss, ain't it? Thousands of miles, I've heerd say."

"Not quite so far. It is a long way; it took me two days to get here. You may go home now, Mary. Hodgson will see me back safely."

"That I will, miss—my lady, I mean. I'd see you back if 'twas a dozen miles instead of the bit it is."

"Never mind 'my lady,' Hodgson. Call me Miss Alma as you used to do."

"So I will, miss, and thank you. 'My lady' seems a bit strange like. You be looking thin and poorly like, I fancy."

"Oh, it's only the journey," she replied, with a smile that lit up her wan face with a sad radiance.

"Aye, I dare say," Hodgson said, dubiously, regarding her with a serious look. "Travelling do tire folks, I've heerd say; but I never heerd that it made them thin, and worried the flesh off their bones—and there ain't much of you left, miss, that there ain't."

"Oh, nonsense," she said, laughing, in spite of her depression, at the old man's quaint manner; "I shall be as bright and well as ever to-morrow. This lovely air will set me up again. How is Hannah?"

"Badly, miss, badly."

"So I am sorry to hear from every one I have seen."

"Yes, Miss Alma. 'Until death us do part,' I said, when I were married to my old woman in the church yonder. It's coming now, miss—'death us do part.'"

"Aye, Hodgson, it is Heaven's will. Poor, dear Hannah! I'm glad to be in time to see her."

"And she'll be glad and grateful too, miss; but it's small time she'll have to be grateful here. She'll carry her gratitude to the next world with her, and it may be a good mark beside her name in the great book."

"Can I see her?"

"I'll go up and see, my lady. She was asleep a little while ago—and the doctor said her life for another day depended on her resting without being disturbed. If she is not awake—"

"Do not wake her, whatever you do. I will wait any time to talk to her."

"Thank you kindly, miss."

Hodgson stole softly up-stairs murmuring the words, which seemed to have taken a hold on him, "Until death us do part."

They were parting now, this kindly couple, who had shared one another's simple joys and sorrows for so many years. In all his grief Hodgson had a vein of simple thankfulness running through it.

"It might have been worse," he said to himself, in humble thankfulness for his little home. "I might have had the lodge taken from me, and had to go to the workhouse, like Joe Bradley. They parted him and his old woman, and he wasn't anigh her when she died—and he was a better keeper nor me, and a likelier man every way."

That he was not ousted from the lodge at the time of Mr. Bouverie's death he owed to Alma, and he knew it, and regarded her as little less than an angel in consequence.

The woman who was watching by the side of his dying wife, put her finger to her lip as he entered the little room, scarce bigger than a closet, but fresh with the soft air and the scent of flowers which came in through the tiny window.

"Hush!" she said, "she's asleep still."

"Sound?"

"Yes."

"You are sure?"

"As sound as ever. Don't disturb her, for Heaven's sake!"

"Miss Alma has come."

"Then she'll die happy, poor dear. How she has been craving to see her. Is the other one come too?"

"Not as I've heard. Miss Alma—that is, my Lady Nortonshall—will satisfy her."

"Aye, I hope so. She's awfully uneasy, my poor old woman."

"She is that—she's going hard, Jem."

"It always is hard going, when the soul's wishing back to the world as hers is now. I know it is—though she don't mourn, she can't die."

"Don't take on, Jem; she'll be better now the young lady has come. It's something on her mind that's troubling her."

"Don't talk about it," said the old man, with a tearless sob. "I can't bear to think of it. My poor Hannah—my poor old wife!"

He stopped a moment on the staircase to give way to the silent, scalding tears which ran like drops of heart's blood from his aged eyes, and it was with difficulty he composed himself sufficiently to go down to the lady who had come so far to see them.

Alma saw the emotion in his face, and her voice was low and compassionate as she spoke to him.

"No worse, I hope?" she said.

"No, miss, no."

"She is still asleep?"

"Yes, miss."

He could only answer her in monosyllables, and she sincerely felt for the grief that fettered his usually garrulous tongue.

"Perhaps she will wake better, Hodgson; who knows?"

"No, Miss Alma, never better in this world. She's much the same as when I looked on her last—as well as she will be this side Heaven. It's a hard parting. We've been man and wife forty year come Martinmas, and—"

He broke down altogether now and sobbed, and Alma felt her own eyes grow dim at the sight of his faithful grief. She could say nothing to comfort him. What could be said to one whose nearest and dearest is rapidly passing under the lifted curtain which veils the entrance to the unseen world?

"I ask your pardon, miss," he said, at length; "I should not worry you with my troubles. Hannah's asleep now, but the nursing woman thinks it won't be long before she wakens—but if you wouldn't mind resting a bit in my old arm-chair here. It's clean and soft, though it's a bit rough like."

Alma's limbs were weary, and the old-fashioned chair that Hodgson drew toward her inviting enough, with its queer odds and ends of cushions, and its quaint home-contrived padding, but outside the house lay Westerpark, every tree in the grand old avenue waving a welcome to her, every blade of grass whispering of home and happy days gone by.

"No, thank you," she said. "I think I'll walk in the park a few minutes. I sha'n't be likely to meet any one?"

"Not a soul, miss. The family is away, and there's only a few servants up at the house, and not one of them would come out of this gate at night, because— I beg your pardon, I'm sure, Miss Alma; I quite forgot who I was talking to."

"Oh, I understand why they are afraid, Hodgson. I have no such fears; but I have a fancy for seeing my old home again. I suppose no one can come in from the outside?"

"Not a soul, my lady."

"You are sure of it?"

"Quite. Anybody who wants to come in must ring, and I must open the gate."

"Then I am quite safe from intrusion?"

"As safe as can be, Miss Alma."

"I won't go out of hearing, Hodgson. You will call me when your wife wakes?"

"The very minute, miss."

She put on the hat which lay beside her, and throwing her mantle around her, went out.

The autumn moon had arisen by this time, and the park was almost as bright as noonday. Herds of deer were quietly grazing or resting on the grass, and they raised their pretty heads as the slight figure went by.

How familiar they seemed to her. The very rabbits that ran across her path, the birds that stirred in the branches, all seemed like old friends, as she stepped noiselessly along.

Presently she came in sight of the house, her home of old days, and covering her face with her hands, she wept out the bitter memories that had clouded her life since then.

How sadly she thought, as she stood looking at the mute front of Westerpark, with its closed blinds and sharp outlines, of the happy days that had been here before the terrible catastrophe that made her fatherless, of Frank Vavasour and his love—but no, she must not think of him. She was a wife now, and he—

A slight noise behind her made her turn round, and every limb seemed to lose its power, and the beating of her heart to stop, for there, close to her—so close that the outstretching of her hand would have touched him—the moonlight shining full upon his pale face, making it look white and ghastly as a corpse, stood the very man that was in her thoughts—Frank Vavasour himself!

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE PARK.

I thought of fond greetings, the welcome, the kiss,
The friendly hand's pressure—oh, was it for this?

—*Haynes Bayley.*

Alma stood gazing with distended eyes upon the figure which so suddenly appeared upon her startled vision—a figure which in her wild excitement she believed to be the spirit of the man she had loved so well—but she neither screamed nor fainted at the sight.

That it was Frank Vavasour himself, in the body, she never for one moment imagined. Highly strung as her nerves had been for the last few weeks, she imagined that her own over-excited fancy had conjured up an apparition, and she recoiled from it in dread and horror, but with a strange fascination creeping over her, for which she could not account.

The shape from which she drew back so shudderingly advanced toward her with the soft, pale moonlight playing full upon his face, making it appear ghastly pale; and his utter astonishment at meeting her thus, and in this place of all others, gave an unnatural gleam of wildness to his eyes, for it was in reality no spirit, no freak of a disordered fancy, which had encountered Alma's gaze, but her old lover in the flesh, and as bewildered by this sudden meeting as herself.

Frank held out his hands toward her without speaking, but she retreated step by step before him, putting out her own at arm's length, as though to shield herself against his touch. Her blood seemed to freeze within her veins as she saw him approach nearer and nearer to her, and she felt as though the next moment would bring them in contact.

"Mercy, mercy!" she gasped out, in wild affright, as though she would entreat him to come no nearer.

"Alma!" he exclaimed, in surprised accents, while his voice was low and choked by contending emotions, "is it thus we meet again? Do you not know me?"

And then the certainty that it was himself, and not his spirit, that she looked upon, broke like a gleam of joy upon her, and forgetful of all that had passed, and the changed circumstances under which they met, the life came back to Alma's face and the warmth to her heart, which began to beat wildly with love and joy.

It was her own Frank who stood there before her, and in the delirious joy which filled her heart to the exclusion of all other thoughts, she turned to him with outstretched arms and streaming eyes.

Husband, all were forgotten for one brief moment, as she saw the lover of her youth standing there, and she cried aloud—

"Frank! dear Frank!"

"Alma! my own Alma!"

There was a moment's breathless pause, during which she felt the pulses of her heart beating more wildly than she had power to check, and then, before she was aware of it, he had folded her to his breast in a warm, close embrace, and kissed her upturned face with wild, passionate fondness.

And for one brief instant of intoxicating happiness she lay there unresisting, only conscious that here was rest, and peace, and love illimitable, and she surrendered herself to the feeling; but it was only for an instant, and then she awoke to the stern reality.

With the first thought of her position she recovered herself, and stood free of his encircling arm, looking at him with crimson cheeks, in which tears contended with anger for the mastery.

Frank Vavasour drooped his head before her gaze in self-abasement, and his lip quivered with genuine emotion as he addressed her in extenuation of his presumption.

"Forgive me, Lady Nortonshall," he murmured, "but I was not master of my own actions. The sudden, unexpected sight of you here, alone under the moonlight, looking upon scenes we have so often viewed together under happier auspices, unmanned me—made me forget the respect which is your due. Dear Lady Nortonshall, say you forgive me."

With the first sound of that well-loved voice all Alma's anger vanished.

"Lady Nortonshall!" she murmured, reproachfully. "Oh, Frank, that name from you!"

"It is your right," he answered, bitterly; "and it is better for both our sakes that I should call you by your proper name. You are another man's wife."

"Ah, well, you are right, Frank," and she lingered with loving accents over the dear name. "Forgive you! Oh, what is there I would not forgive my old playmate, now that I see him again?"

She had forgotten the very existence of Claudia Wynne in her joy at seeing him, and could remember only that he was living and once more beside her.

Perilous thoughts; but no idea of danger to herself crossed her mind as she spoke.

"But it seems so hard, so cold a name from your lips, Frank—Mr. Vavasour," she added, hesitatingly.

"It's of no use," he replied, with a sad smile, marking her correction. "Names of ceremony don't sound naturally when spoken by our lips to each other. Ah, Alma, let me tell you now—now that a heaven-sent chance has given us the opportunity of standing face to face, with no witness near us but the old trees which have so often heard our vows of mutual love—that your blessed image has never been out of my heart or mind for an instant since we last met—no, not even when they told me that you were false to all the memories of your youth, and had forgotten me."

"Who told you so?"

"Ah, more than one. I was led to think of you as one who, for the gayety of the world, was losing all recollection of any brighter, any happier existence—that you were a leader of fashion, a wife indifferent to her husband and her home—that you, the pure, loving Alma I once knew, had degenerated—fallen from the glittering pinnacle on which my fancy had placed you—to a glittering butterfly, a woman of the world."

"They have told you truly, then," she answered, defiantly.

"How?"

"Yes, I am all they say," she continued, with flashing eyes. "I am—or, at least, I try to be. I owe the man who calls me wife—who holds me as 'Something better than his dog; a little dearer than his horse'—I owe him nothing, not even obedience. There are times when I would forget his very existence, if that were possible."

"Then make it possible. Forget it with me."

These were the words which rose to the young man's lips as she spoke, and almost forced an utterance; and it was a hard struggle for him to refrain from taking her within his arms, to implore her to fly with him—to be his, and his only, in some far-off land, where, unknown, they could live alone for each other. "The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

But Frank Vavasour was not one of those who hold all worth losing for love. However strongly tempted himself, he was not the man to tempt another to her ruin, and he smothered the rising words which, if spoken, might have wrought a revolution in two lives.

Had Alma consented even to his mad thought—had she forgotten rank, station, the world's esteem and all for him—what return could he have made her for it, when by his own act he had forfeited his own self-respect and the acquaintance of all honorable men?

He did not speak, and his companion read something of his thoughts, and repented of her imprudent words.

"Ah, Frank, forget what I have said," she asked, imploringly. "I am very unhappy sometimes, and too quick to speak of my trouble. I have endured so much since you went away—oh, so much!"

"My poor darling!" he murmured, taking a step toward her.

"No, no! not again. Do not come near me!" she exclaimed, shrinking from him. "Don't try and make me forget that I am his wife. Oh, Frank, since I heard that you were killing yourself with dissipation and wild living—that you had sunk into depths of vice too disgraceful for a woman to hear about—that (which was worse than all the rest to me), that you loved another, an actress—that—"

"Stay! No more of this!" exclaimed Frank, and there was that in his voice which startled her, it was so determined and intense in its tone. "If you ever loved me, Alma, say not another word respecting her. She has been to me the best, the truest friend that ever a man had. But for Claudia Wynne I might—nay, should—have been that which they made you believe I was—a gambler, a *roué*, and a drunkard. But for her angel goodness I should have died, I verily believe, when I was struck down by the assassin's knife. You never could think ill of her if you but knew her. Some one has maligned her to you. Who was it? Nay, do not shrink from telling me. I know it has been done."

"It was—" Alma was beginning to say, but she hesitated to repeat the name of Frank's calumniator, remembering the friendship that was said to exist between them.

"Well, why do you not speak?" he asked.

"No, perhaps I had better not tell you; it might make mischief. But I have reasons of my own for not thinking well of the woman I was told you loved."

"Whoever told you so lied," Frank replied, with bitter emphasis. "I honor and respect Claudia, and as a brother might a sister so do I love her, but in no other way. My heart will never more beat for woman as it has beaten for you."

"Hush, Frank, hush! You must not speak like that to me. You are quite mistaken in this woman, though. I tell you that she is cruel, hard-hearted—no true woman."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I am not mistaken," she answered,

vehemently: "I have reason for what I say. This Claudia, if such be her name, is false, deceiving."

"But why should you say this—you have never met her?"

"Never—never seen her but once, on the stage—and never wish to. Shall I tell you what I know she did? For if my letter had ever reached you, and you loved me as you say you do, you would have risen from your death bed to answer it."

Frank looked at her in utter astonishment. Her words and manner were so wild that they were utterly beyond his comprehension.

"What can you mean?" he asked, after a pause.

"Mean! Why, that when I heard you were dying—that was what they told me—and my heart was breaking for a word of news from you, and I knew not how to obtain it, I wrote to that woman. I heard that she was with you, watching you, nursing you back to life—where I would have given mine to be—and I thought to myself, 'If she loves him she will pity me.' I wrote to her, there was a note enclosed for you, not one word of which the whole wide world might not have read without thinking any evil. It was unsealed—your love might have read it had she so willed, perhaps she did; but this I know, she neither gave it to you nor answered me."

"I cannot understand you. I never heard of any letter. No line from you would have been left unanswered by me."

"I know that; did I not say so? She—this woman whom you love and respect (you would not if you knew all)—kept my letter, and laughed at the writer."

"No, no; you wrong her. You will know yourself that you wrong her some day. If any letter ever came from you, it was no malice of hers that kept it back. She is candor and honesty itself. But we will speak of this again. Are you staying here?"

"Only for the night. I came to see old Hannah at the lodge. They seem to think she knows something she has not yet told about that fearful night. Hodgson sent for me."

"And for me also."

"Strange! Then you are here to see her?"

"I am. But you are not alone?"

"Oh, no, my aunt is up at the house; but she is too tired for anything, so I sallied out alone. I found Hannah asleep, so strolled out, which accounts for my being here. I thought at first you were a ghost, Frank."

She smiled as she spoke, but it soon faded away.

"I must go," she continued. "It is not right for me to stay here talking to you, and Hannah will most likely be awake now."

"There is no harm in our meeting," he replied. "The only evil deed has been mine, and the sound of your voice brought back the old time so strongly that I forgot myself. I shall not offend again, believe me, Alma."

"I would trust you with my life, Frank, you know that; but I am alarmed. Suppose that a whisper of our meeting should reach my husband's ears?"

"What then? It was purely accidental."

"Ah! but he would not believe that. We must not meet again."

"You are right, Alma. For both our sakes it would be better not, though Heaven knows the thought is very bitter to me. Let me say good-bye to you now."

And he held out his hand.

"Nay, Frank, I will walk with you to the lodge. My business here is the same as yours. We have a mutual interest in whatever that poor old woman may have to tell."

So she placed her arm within his as she spoke, and they walked toward the park gates.

"Do you think that Hannah really knows anything?" asked Alma, after a pause. "The letter sent to me was very urgent, or I should not have come in such a manner."

"So was mine urgent, yet hardly explicit," he replied. "I judged from it that the poor old woman was delirious; but the merest thread of a clue will be sometimes sufficient to unravel the most complicated entanglement, so I started at once."

Hodgson himself was watching at the door for Alma's return. He started when he saw how she was accompanied.

"So they've met!" he said to himself. "Pretty dear, that's just how I've seen her look many a time, leaning on his arm! Ah, me! I'm afeard that she's not happy now. I hope that no evil may come o' their meeting."

They found Hannah awake when they reached the lodge, and anxiously asking for "Miss Alma." Softly they went into the little room, and bent over the lowly bed, where Azrael's wings were already hovering, to hear what the dying woman might have to tell them.

Lovingly and tenderly she took their hands, and held them in her own. She had seen them grow up from infancy together, and looked upon them as children yet. The news of their parting had been sad to Hannah; but she welcomed them with a feeble smile, and plunged into her story at once.

"I've a good bit to tell, and my time's short," she said. "It's lain heavy on my mind for many a long month—ever sin' I knew I'd had my warning to take leave of the world forever. But you were married and away, my dear, and Master Frank we all thought he was drowned, and I was too frightened to tell any one else what laid so heavy on my mind. I can tell you now, my dears, now that you are here together, who it was that did the murder that night. I saw him. Listen—closer, closer yet! It was—"

She paused a moment, startled by the opening of the door below, and they listened in breathless excitement for what should come next.

Hannah had spoken in gasps, and with great difficulty; but she resumed.

"It's very near, my dears," she went on. "My foot's at the threshold of the next world now, and I won't take the secret with me. Hark! What's that?"

It was a noise in the room below which made the room swim before Alma's eyes as she sank on the ground beside the bed. It was her husband's voice speaking in loud and angry accents, and she bent her lovely head in terror, fearing she knew not what.

"I know she is here!" she heard him exclaim. "Stand out of the way!"

There was the sound of a heavy footfall on the stairs, and the next moment Lord Nortonshall burst into the room.

"I was sure of it," he cried. "Stand up, my lady, and look me in the face if you can!"

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 9.)

☞ People who care what they dream about, had better keep away from Bald Mountain, Tennessee, where a noted den of rattlesnakes has long been the terror of the country. Forty have been counted on a single rock, and on any sunny day 500 may be seen projecting from beneath a circular ledge.

A STORY OF THE PANIC.

BY WALLACE PUTNAM REED.

The great financial crash had come at last. It came when least expected. Bank after bank suspended; and the panic spread from the crowded metropolis to the smallest village—from Wall street to the cross-roads. Of course there was nothing very alarming to get frightened about, but everybody thought there might be. It was just like an army which concludes to make a regular stampede, when the attacking force is probably only a few daring skirmishers. The contagion of fright is very catching.

Evil tidings travel rapidly. Everybody in Colford knew that Henry Vernon was a ruined man. The startling intelligence ran through the village like wildfire. It was a delicious morsel for the gossips; and they straightway went to work, inventing details and extemporizing comments.

The Vernons had resided in Colford for the last three years. They were not only the wealthiest people in the county, but belonged to one of the first families in the State. Mrs. Vernon had been heard to express rather ultra ideas on the subject of blue blood and *caste;* and, as she visited only the select few, it was thought that she considered herself a good deal better than her neighbors. The head of the family was a confirmed invalid; the daughter just entering bellehood; and the son, Mr. George Vernon, had but recently finished his college course.

Perhaps the most astonished man in Colford was the Rev. Mr. Timothy. The Vernons were members of his church; and he had known them for years—long before they came to the village. He could hardly believe his ears, when his wife invaded his study with the startling news of his old friend's failure.

"Reduced to beggary!" cried he, upsetting his inkstand.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Timothy, with wonderful calmness; "they will have nothing left. Even Vernon Hall must be sold to pay their debts. But I always expected something of the kind. They owe nearly everybody; and then they are *awfully* proud and extravagant."

"Humph!"

"Oh, it is notorious" rejoined the lady, "and you know it, Mr. Timothy."

"Sarah!"

Mrs. Timothy actually jumped, as her husband pronounced her name.

"Why, James, what have I done?"

Her husband gave her a queer look.

"Who has been talking to you this morning?"

"Mrs. Colonel Jones was here a few moments," she answered, with a flushed face.

"Humph!"

"And Mr. Vernon owes Colonel Jones quite a large sum—a security debt—and the colonel intends to make him pay it in a hurry."

"And that is what you call owing nearly everybody?" said Mr. Timothy, with a smile.

Mrs. Timothy was about to reply, when her husband commenced pacing the room, as he was in the habit of doing when excited.

"Sarah," he said, very gravely, "you cannot imagine how this news affects me. I have known Vernon from boyhood. You have heard that he was once a prominent New York banker?"

"Yes," interrupted his wife, with an air of triumph. "I know it, and I'm disgusted with banks and bankers. I—"

"Stop!" said Mr. Timothy, sternly. "Don't echo any village gossip here. I know Vernon to be a man of sterling integrity. He has weathered more than one financial storm. Why, during the great panic, years ago, when all the banks were suspending, he was almost the only one that stood firm. He did more. He gave ten thousand dollars that winter, to relieve the suffering poor who were thrown out of employment."

Mrs. Timothy opened her eyes.

"Yes," continued her husband, "and I know to a certainty that he has, during his business career, educated nearly a dozen young men, and given them a start in life. Now you can understand why I sympathize with the Vernons. They have brains and integrity—all of them—and although I cannot approve of Mrs. Vernon's old-world notions about birth and ancestry, I regret their misfortune none the less. And, mark my words, they will pull through it yet. Young George Vernon is just what his father was at his age, and Nellie is a brilliant girl. Her talents will be coined into gold—I am sure of it!"

Mrs. Timothy was silenced. She thought of old Mr. Vernon's gray head, of the light-hearted Nellie and her manly brother. She recollected Mrs. Vernon's kindness to the poor; and then she found her indignation rising against the Joneses and the whole tribe of gossips.

Mr. Timothy put on his hat and sallied forth for a walk in the village. He found everybody talking about the Vernons and their misfortune. There were many ill-natured flings at the family pride, and, more than once, it was hinted that adversity would tone them down a little and do them good.

"I want to see all these 'first families' go to work," said one bluff old deacon. "It will be better for them and for the country too."

"Right!" exclaimed Mr. Timothy, energetically. "And when the Vernons go to work, with either brain or hand, they will make you acknowledge that they deserve to rank among our 'first families.'"

Deacon Andrews shook his head very gravely, and his pastor walked away with something like a frown upon his usually smiling face. His morning walk seemed destined to be anything but a pleasant one.

"I'll drop in and see the Vernons," he said to himself, as he came to their gate.

Vernon Hall never looked more attractive than on this particular morning. It was a fine old mansion—nothing modern about the outside—and the broad terraces, sloping down to the street, were crowned with "a shrubbery that Shenstone might have envied." All these external beauties Mr. Timothy took in at a glance as he walked up the avenue. He was not surprised when Miss Nellie came to the door, in response to his ring, but he was a little astonished to see so bright a countenance. The sparkling little brunette had never welcomed him with more animation and ease. She rallied him about his puzzled face, jestingly explained the absence of servants, and declared that the Hall had never before looked so home-like.

"We have it all to ourselves, you know. I find it delightful."

Mr. Timothy followed Miss Nellie into the library, and here a new wonder greeted him. Could he trust his eyes? Here was his old friend, writing away with all his former clerkly vigor. Vernon threw down his pen and gave his visitor a hearty shake of the hand.

"Sit down, James," he said, excitedly. "I knew you would come. Let me still retain one man's friendly sympathy, and I'll continue to respect mankind—at a distance."

The minister attempted a few consoling words.

Vernon's eyes twinkled.

"I see that you are all in the dark—hopelessly befogged. You came to lament my disaster. Oblige me by tendering your congratulations."

"I don't understand," stammered the perplexed clergyman.

"Of course you don't. I'll enlighten you a little. Five days ago, I thought that we were beggars. But now—'

"But now!" cried the Rev. Timothy.

"The tide has turned. I have come to the conclusion that occupation is the best medicine for me. I have just concluded an arrangement with *The Capitalist*, and am now entering upon my duties as Corresponding Editor of that enterprising paper. You see that my financial experience is worth something still—thirty dollars a week, at least."

Mr. Timothy again shook hands with his old friend.

"But I have not told you the half of our good fortune," said Vernon, "George has turned inventor. You may recollect that, when he was at home last vacation, he was full of his improved brake?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Timothy, "and you and Mrs. Vernon threw cold water on it."

"Well, the youngster knew what he was about, it seems. He writes me, from New York, that Airline, the great railroad man, has offered him thirty thousand dollars for a half interest—and he has accepted."

"Good!" cried the Reverend Timothy, throwing up his hat.

"Wait until I finish. Nellie has written a novel; and, better still, sold it for a cool five hundred. Not much, but encouraging for a first effort, isn't it?"

"I knew about the novel all the time," said Mr. Timothy. "In fact I advised her to write it. But what does Mrs. Vernon say?"

"Just what I have always said," responded that lady, entering the room with Miss Nellie. "I have always maintained that blood—the genuine blue-blood—would rise superior, under any circumstances."

"I'll give you a better maxim than that," said Mr. Timothy. "It is this—brains always win!"

The amendment was graciously accepted—and the party adjourned to the lunch-table.

Colford reluctantly accepted the good fortune of the Vernons; and in the course of twenty-four hours, grew cordially demonstrative. Colonel Jones has no idea of pressing Mr. Vernon about that security debt—but he is very anxious to sell George a vacant lot for his new factory, and he will probably succeed. Mr. Timothy stoutly asserts that the Vernons have proved their right to rank among the "first families" in Colford, and nobody contradicts him. "Brains always win!"

ONE KIND OF YOUNG MEN.

BY DAISY BURNS.

Joe Martyn is a regular gallant—a beau of the period; all the girls love Joe; but none so well as Ada Ray. She loves him with all her heart, for he makes her believe she is all the world to him. One night Joe walked home from church with pretty, sweet Ada. They stepped upon the portico of Ada's home, and she invited Joe in.

"No, Ada," says Joe, "I'll not come; but let us sit here in the moonlight awhile," and he presses her hand in a lover-like manner, and she sits beside him on the rustic bench. Then Joe looks up to the moon and quotes—

"The violet loves a sunny bank,
The cowslip loves the lea,
The scarlet creeper loves the elm,
But I love—thee."

"Bayard Taylor has written some sweet lines, hasn't he? How do you like that last line, darling, mine?" A blush 'neath the moonlight answers him.

"Ada, I love you more than all on earth."

"I hope so, dear Joe."

"Then won't you give me one kiss, dear—just one?"

"Oh, no, Joe; it is not right; and I must not."

"Not right—ain't we going to marry some day?"

"Then some day I will kiss you."

"Pshaw! Ada, you don't love me," and Joe gets up as if to leave.

"Oh, Joe!"

"No, you don't care three straws for me. Good-bye."

"Joe, don't be angry with me. I do love you, and you know it."

"Well, then, kiss me."

"But, Joe, I never did such a thing."

"I know it. Just once, dear." And he catches the sweet face between his hands and presses his lips to hers once, twice, thrice. "Now," he said, "I believe you love me;" and while Ada goes to her room happy and delighted, her face beaming with smiles, Joe walks down town, whistling merrily, and meets Jack Wilson.

"Say, Joe," says Jack, "where have you been since church?"

"Oh, making love to Ada, my blue-eyed darling. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, Joe, how *do* you fool these girls into believing you?"

"Oh, talk soft, quote poetry, and fib a little; and, Jack, to-night I cajoled the little witch into kissing me. What do you think of that?"

"What—Ada Ray?"

"Yes, I kissed her three times; whoo, but they were sweet."

"I say, Tom," says Jack to a new-comer, "Joe here got a kiss from pretty Ada to-night; ain't he lucky?"

"Joe," says Tom, "you ought to be a happy dog; if a girl loved me as Ada Ray does you, I'd be the happiest boy in town."

"Pshaw," says Joe, "I like Lucy Weston much the better, but Ada don't know that, or I wouldn't have got my kiss."

☞ Scene in Court.—Judge—"Have you anything to offer to the Court before sentence is passed on you?" Prisoner—"No, judge, I had ten dollars, but my lawyers took that."

☞ Americans in Paris.—Of the thirty thousand Americans permanently residing in Paris nearly twenty thousand are from Louisiana, five thousand from Virginia, three thousand from other Southern States, and only two thousand from the North and West.

☞ An elderly gentleman from one of the rural districts of Maine is reported to be in an uncomfortable fix. He came into Portland by a late evening train, recently, went to the first hotel he could find, and secured a room. Getting up in the morning, he looked up his room, leaving his carpet-bag, with his pocket-book inside, and putting the key of the room in his pocket, started for a walk, and he has been walking for the past two or three days in a vain endeavor to find the hotel, a portion of the time being assisted by a policeman. They have visited every hotel in the city, but cannot find one that fits his key, and the old gentleman don't know what to do about it.

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

☞ An accomplished young lady at Cedar Falls, Iowa, whistles one hundred and fourteen tunes.

☞ Polygamy is said to be on the decrease in Turkey, in consequence of the general adoption of European fashions.

☞ A pin, swallowed a year ago by a young lady in Franklin, Kansas, lately came out through her left eye, entirely destroying the sight.

☞ A citizen of Lacrosse named Gin, has petitioned to have his name changed because his sweetheart doesn't like it.

☞ The Alexandria *Gazette* says that a lady who the other day bought a barrel of cabbages in the Georgetown market, found a live baby in it, well dressed and with a milk bottle in its mouth, and so protected by the manner in which the cabbages had been arranged as to prevent suffocation.

☞ Cloud, the oarsman, who started from this city some time ago to row to New Orleans, by the canals and rivers intervening, died when he had almost completed his journey. He was found in his boat, five miles above Plaquemine, La., prostrated by exhaustion, and died next day. A diary kept by him shows that, for several days before his death, he was suffering from what he termed "heavy shakes."

☞ The Providence Journal says, that the Brown University class of '76 has voted to allow the Freshmen to wear such hats and carry as many canes as they please—and has entered its protest against the barbarous custom of hazing, in every form.

☞ A young man in Troy owes his life to a shawl pin. While walking in the suburbs, he was attacked by a vicious dog, and thrown to the ground. A companion tried in vain to rescue him—when he drew a shawl-pin from his coat and plunged it into the dog's nose. This forced him to release his hold, and sent him off howling with pain.

☞ Says the London Spectator of a recent date:—"It has been a superstition for generations, that a marriage performed by a captain of a man-of-war on his own quarter-deck was legal. Her Majesty's law officers, however, having informed the Admiralty that all such marriages are illegal, they have for the future been prohibited."

☞ A few days since, it is related, J. W. Kenne, of Pembroke, N. Y., took his mare from the barn, leaving a two-months colt behind. On his return, some two hours after, he found the colt *on the roof of the barn.* Being unable to follow the mare, it had sought some means of escape. In the first place it had gone up a flight of stairs—fifteen steps—then over the hay-mow, and out of a window in the gable end of the barn, on to a half-roof. From this elevation it worked its way to the roof of the main barn, which is very steep; then it returned to the half-roof, whence, on the return of the mother, it jumped to the ground, a distance of fourteen feet, a feat which it accomplished without being the least injured.

☞ Let young men wear old gloves, hat and coat till they can honestly afford new. It requires uncommon courage; but it will have good results. Men schooled to such deeds of heroism will refuse to indorse bad bills, will not vote for scamps, nor kneel in the mud to scoundrels who give lavishly what they have gained lawlessly, nor take with pride the hand of a villain, however exalted.

☞ A few nights since a sailor living in a house at Munjoy, Portland, over which passes a telegraph wire, dreamed that he was on board ship, and that some of the ropes needed tauting. He got up on the roof of the house, and commenced pulling on the wire. Finding he could not manage it alone, he called to a shipmate who was sleeping with him. His cries awoke the man, and he went up and discovered the other in his perilous position. Taking hold of his leg to prevent his falling, the somnambulist was awakened, when, looking up and seeing the stars, he thought sure he was on shipboard, and again commenced hauling on the wire. He was finally got down without harm

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MY BONNIE LASS.

I passed 'neath the shade of a wide-spreading tree,
And heard a voice ring with laughter and glee;
I knew who was coming, coming to me—
My own bonnie lass.

Singing she came, round the still glassy pond,
From the dense hazel copse a little beyond;
And my heart it went out with a welcome fond
To my own bonnie lass.

Singing she came, and the bright sunset glare,
Had tinged with a ruddier gold her hair—
The fairest she seemed of all things fair,
My own bonnie lass.

She gazed in my eyes with her orbs of deep blue,
Her arms round my neck she tenderly threw,
While soft fell her words, refreshing as dew
On parched mountain grass.

Her dimpled cheek lovingly resting on mine,
I felt her wee hand in my waving locks twine,
And, lost in a transport of bliss naif divine,
I heard her faint whisper, "I'm thine—ever thine—
Thy own bonnie lass!"

C. C.

RIGHT OR LEFT?

BY SPHINX.

"The skies were ashen and sober,
The leaves they were crisped and sere,
The leaves they were withering and sere—
It was a night in the lonesome October,
Of my most immemorial year—"

sang out a peculiar minor voice, in a free, wild impulse of expression under surrounding influences. A figure stood at the cross-roads. It was this one who sang, and the words were not less weird than the gloaming. Her dress floated in the wind, and she raised her hat slightly (as she stood undecided which road to take) so that the breeze might cool her forehead.

"Now a person to whom these two roads were matters of indifference, would of course steer carelessly to the left; it is so natural to take the wrong road first (if the 'left' *means* wrong?)" she soliloquized, "And a very religious, rather superstitious person would *decidedly* choose the *right* one. I feel a *little* in sympathy with the latter, the man said that *this* one was the shorter road, and yet, and yet I believe I'll take the left to see what comes of it!" No sooner said than done. She consequently got into her long, swinging gait, and looking over her shoulder to prove herself quite *alone*, took up her rhythmical cadence to keep her company. She inhaled the damp, mossy exhalations of the fields with the zest of a naturalist, and peered into the crooks and crannies of the road, as she glided swiftly onward. She passed a narrow lane, and did not like its dark appearance; she was nearing a bit of gloomy woodland on the left, when she burst out *again*, into the words which haunted her musical imagination:—

"It was a night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;"

when straight ahead of her, she saw the figure of a man reclining on the grass near the roadside.

He was within a few yards of her; was looking at her, had heard her voice, and the words. A terror took possession of her, yet she walked rapidly toward him, her eyes fixed upon his in anticipation of any words he might utter, or any movement he might make. "What eyes!" she thought, "shall I ever forget them?" No wonder she asked herself the question; for they were the most attractive features of the face, and *unpleasantly* so, in the fact that they seemed mere *shining shields* of his thought. Blankly dark and *so dark!*

She was now within a yard of him, and still looking at him, indeed, as it were *holding* him there with her glance, till she should pass. His head rested on his left hand, and his black soft hat was pulled down over those eyes, and then flattened outward, showing a low line of forehead. His expression never wavered the slightest; he beheld, and was *still* beholding when she passed him. She wanted to run, but was too proud! but *such a walk!* the trees seemed to *spin* past her; a turn in the road at last brought her in sight of a low rumbling wagon. The nightfall was already at hand, and the house she was looking for nowhere in sight. She hailed the driver.

"Please direct me to Miss Martha Agnew's cottage!" The man turned. He was old, gray, and worn out in appearance, and seemed too weary to evince surprise even. He placed one hand upon the gravel in his wagon, and answered—

"You are a good quarter of a mile out of the way, young lady. You ought to hev taken the lane jest below here, it branches off to the right."

That was the very lane she had shuddered at in passing, and then to go *back!* she would walk *miles* first!

"Well, if I keep straight on, how soon will I get there?"

A faint doubting smile came over his face—a hint of her mental organs being defective, but he replied soberly—

"In two hours or thereabouts! *Some* people *like* to go all around Robin Hood's barn, *I* never could see the sense of it 'zactly! But I never was married," he mused. "Now if you had a sweetheart *with* you, miss, I might *reckon* on your choosin' the longest road." While she was standing irresolute she heard a voice coming nearer and nearer, singing *her words, her song!* She turned a frightened face backward, and waited! But right out of the woods, *opposite* the cart, appeared an enormously tall man, and as she expected, suddenly, the *one* she had passed a quarter of a mile below.

"Good-evening, Mr. Farrer."

"How are you, Jacob?"

"Middlin', sir."

He paused, then searched for something in numerous pockets; at last produced a yellow envelope.

"I found this in the road—is it yours?" holding it toward her.

She took it, an envelope addressed to herself: "Winifred Keith. Care of ——." Here it was torn off, but below was written in lead-pencil, "Ask for Miss Martha Agnew's Cottage (at the station), Thorpe's Lane, near old Turnpike."

"Y-e-s, it's mine," she answered slowly, regarding it carefully.

He turned to the old man, asking some uninteresting question; and adding nothing further, she retraced her steps, and when out of their sight ran rapidly.

It was very dark, but she would soon be with her grand-aunt at the pace she was now clearing the road. Ah, yes, 'twas all right now! Crossing the dark little lane, there was a whitewashed fence—no, a gate! She opened it, and found herself approaching the old barn she had not seen since her childhood. How stupid not to have remembered this lane back of the house and the gateway, through which the cows were driven home at night! She came around the side of the house, looked in upon the homely dining-room, and saw (how pleasant a sight) that she was expected. It was the same Aunt Martha who welcomed her at the door, only *so much* older! It made her young voice unsteady for a moment as the dear, firm, warm-hearted grasp of the wrinkled hands encased her cool, slender fingers, which tightened with the ardor of youth and love. So many years had elapsed since her memorable visit to the old lady—years that had been passed in many countries—in many scenes of change, and *here* she had not looked for it, in this quiet country home, where things seemed to be always at a solemn and beautiful anchoring in a haven where her restless young life would fain be forever! She thought of it later as she ate her warm supper slowly, and parenthesized her thoughts abruptly with—

"Aunt Martha, who *is* Mr. Farrer?"

"Mr. Farrer! Not here fifteen minutes, and acquainted with our celebrity already. Well, I never!"

"For *what* is he celebrated?"

"For idleness, I presume," the old lady answered, changing her wondering tones to those of righteous indignation. "At least that's all *I* ever found him distinguished for. He's rich—but what of *that?* I'm rich myself, and so are you."

"*I* know it!" her niece answered, laughing heartily.

"He often drops in to see me," the old lady resumed. "What he comes for I can't imagine, unless it be that he prefers my sermons to those of the rector."

"Oh, aunt, don't let him come while I am here," her niece exclaimed, excitedly.

"*That*, then, would exclude him altogether. And Winifred," said the lady sharply, "he is my neighbor, if he *is* lazy, and no ordinary man, let me tell you."

"I do not doubt it, but I do not wish to meet him—he impressed me *very* unpleasantly this evening." She then related what had happened, omitting the song.

"That's just like him, the great idle sluggard, for he sleeps away half of God's great gift of time, though his eyes *are* open. Where his *thoughts* are, it's difficult to say."

The subject was dropped, and it chanced that Miss Keith saw nothing of this bête noire for a week. One evening the sitting-room door opened, and he walked in. Her aunt had gone down to the barn to give some directions to her farmer. The niece, with her unaccountable, wholesome dread of this man, was face to face with him in the sitting-room, entirely dependent upon their previously accidental introduction. She wished herself anywhere else as she offered him a chair. He took the sofa in preference. She sat near the old-fashioned oil-lamp, and was playing annoyedly with her pen and partly written letter. Those very non-committal eyes were resting upon her, just as when she had first walked down that left-hand road.

"Why," she thought, wrathfully, "did I not take the right? But he must be entertained!" She turned toward him with a perplexed contraction of the eyebrows. "Aunt is *very* long returning. Will you have a book? or—"

"No, thank you, I am no reader."

"And is determined *I* shall be *no writer*," she thought, impatiently.

"You do not like me, do you?" he said, abruptly.

She looked now observingly at him, and heard herself saying—"Well, candidly, I do not—you are right."

"Few people like me," he said, walking over to one of Stanfield's water-colors that she had given her aunt, and beginning to stare at it.

"Whose fault is it?" said Miss Keith, biting the nib of her pen, as he returned to his seat on the sofa.

"I have not asked either them or myself. Perhaps *you* can solve the problem?"

"*I* have not given it any *thought*," she answered, frigidly.

"I wonder how it would *seem*, to be liked very much *sincerely*—or loved?"

Oh, where *was* her aunt? And what was he going to say next?

"I'm getting a little tired of it all," he resumed. "That's the reason I came over to-night. Your words set me thinking—'My most *immemorial* year'—*all my* years are immemorial. I don't know whether other people would call them so, but they *are* so to *me!*"

She laid down her pen.

"Aunt says you are aimless and idle!"

"She is right! I have no aims."

"Are you characterless?"

"Not quite."

"Seek work then."

"I am not fond of work."

"Then don't complain of your idle luxury."

"You have taken Aunt Martha's place in the pulpit—a very efficient substitute!"

She turned away—took up her pen, and began to write rapidly. He picked up his hat, stepped out of the window on to the porch, (right over the low sill,) and was *gone*, before she could say "Jack Robinson!"

She tossed her letter aside, and stood up; then lowered the light; took a candle and went up to her own room. She put it on the low, old-fashioned bureau; and then placing her elbow upon it, and folding her arms, she viewed her reflection profoundly. Although it was her double, it seemed like another person. She tried to view it critically, supposing herself to be a third party. The costume she thought was warm, handsome and becoming.

"As for your hair, Winifred Keith, you never *did* know how to arrange it, *and* you never will! You were born to be under the agile fingers of a lady's maid, or better still—created for no particular mode!" she concluded, dropping her hair suddenly from its shell-comb. It curled up at the ends in an acquiescing way, and spread out in a soft, dry fringe about the face, curling crisply around the delicate ears. Her tawny-brown eyes looked so demurely mirthful, and her complexion so wildly flushed, that the reflection was too mockingly brilliant to view, so she blew out the candle flame; then remembered she had forgotten a ribbon to restrain those roguish, coiling, Medusa-like locks, and so groped along the bureau-cover, picked up one (a Roman tie,) she afterward observed, and quickly banded them down in front, allowing the back locks to float loosely over her shoulders. She slid swiftly down the stairs, opened the sitting-room door, and said to her aunt, who was looking over her glasses at a stocking in process of being darned:—

"Could I wear my hair *this* way, do you think, Aunt Martha?"

The old lady paused to view the figure in the doorway.

"Would it be *right*, Aunt Martha, to encourage habits of laziness?" said a voice behind the door.

The old lady burst into a high break of tremulous laughter. And Winifred Keith? She was all of a blaze! Her face was one concentrated, defensive *flash!* She never moved. Then the tall, indolent figure came out from behind the door, and picking up a handkerchief, read the name, like any dull school-boy; in fact, spelled it out droningly—

"'W-i-n-i-f-r-e-d S. K-e-i-t-h'. What is the 'S' for, Aunt Martha?"

"For Sophia."

"I shall call her 'Miss Sophia' in the future."

"I *hate* the name of Sophia?" said Winifred, enraged at his coolness; "and I don't like my first name any better!"

"I can get along with the middle name very well—it's easier to remember!" he answered, throwing himself down into an easy-chair. Then getting hastily up again, as he remembered she was not seated.

"*I* shall take care that you call me *neither!*" she exclaimed, wrathfully, coming into the room.

"I don't see how you will prevent it, Miss Sophia!" he ventured, in comical softness of utterance.

"It won't be necessary to be named by *you*, at all—when you won't see me—I presume!" she returned, sitting down grandly to finish that unsatisfactory letter.

"Oh, you don't mean to absent yourself altogether, do you, when I come over? Aunt Martha says I *can* come when I please! It will be rather tiresome, to always be getting out of my way—won't it?"

She tossed her head, without responding.

"Miss Keith, I must seem a great ogre to you. I meet *very* few ladies, and *all* over fifty!!!"

She bit her lips, and choked back a laugh.

"No answer yet? Well, we'll make a compromise. I'll call you 'W. S.,' and you can return the compliment with something equally brief. Good-night, ladies! I *want* to stay—but am driven from your very door. 'The genial current of my soul is frozen to the core!'"

And the hall-door slammed, the second time, after him, before the lock would catch, so he just caught Winifred's low exclamation of—

"I de-*test* him!"

Just as he left the low door-step, he commenced, in a rich, baritone voice, with a certain laughable bravado in its ring:

"'Twas a night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year."

Winifred's head bent lower and lower over her writing. She hated people to adopt her tunes, and especially those that were involuntary, the offshoot of some mood that was hastily adapted to any rhyme in her head. She did not see *at all*, why some people were privileged to be more conceited and more disrespectful than others. She insinuated the same to her aunt.

"La! child, he is that way to every young person. I don't think his thoughts are upon his words, half the time."

"A lamentable excuse!" thought Winifred. The old lady was evidently partial, so the subject was dropped.

Next he sent a note. "Wouldn't Aunt Martha and 'W. S.' like to view his house and its surroundings; he would be absent several days." They went, and found the interior furnished in dreary magnificence, and the exterior, cultivated by a mechanical landscape-gardener to a state of painful, artificial elegance. Only one room in the house bespoke especial artistic taste. It resembled a lady's boudoir. It was daintly frescoed to begin with, and Winifred, whose natural good taste had been heightened by culture, studied the appointments of this room with the eye of a connoisseur. It was carpeted in shaded gray velvet, brightened by sumach in feathery sprays of varied hues of the original color. The curtains, in pearl-colored satiny folds, had lambrequins of dahlia-tinted red. There was an ebony work-table, a cabinet-piano superbly carved, an India-looking chair, with gray and scarlet plush cushions, two tasselled hassocks, a low lounge, and a small, swinging book-shelf. In one corner was a Parian "Atalanta," on a black marble table; and upon a Chinese tripod, opposite, stood a silver vase filled with Cape jessamine. Over the lounge hung an oil painting of that most remarkable face called the "Neapolitan Boy." Winifred stood a long time before that picture. The midnight darkness of the hair, the dusky depth of the eyes in their singularly startled expression, and the Italian tints of the complexion, holding her spell-bound. The loosely-belted shirt, carelessly open at the throat, and in tinting of a faint pearly blue, imparted a vivid brilliancy to the picture. Its frame of French gilt and ebony was just in the very best taste, her approving glance said.

Aunt Martha's cottage looked most strikingly plain, after their return. The next day Mr. Farrer called. "W. S." was "taking a nap," (or pretending to) and, consequently, did not appear. He came the following day. "W. S." was "doing some marking for her aunt," and couldn't come down. He dropped in *accidentally* the day after. "W. S." had gone out. He left a bunch of scarlet sage and dusty miller, and strolled down the back entrance, which brought him out into that memorable lane. Tim was out there nailing a hinge on the old white-washed gate.

"Tim, my boy, which road did Miss Keith take?"

"She skipped down the one to the right, sur!"

"Skipped?"

"Yes, sur, she was a jumpin' when I see her, and Ranger was a racin' her 'cause she say to him: 'Old fellow, we'll take the right, *this* time, hoping to find better luck.' She mostly runs when she don't walk, sur!" he added sententiously.

Mr. Farrer smiled significantly, and took the road to the right. He walked along with a most peculiar face, spinning dead leaves ahead of him with his cane. Presently he heard a sound of irregular cantering, and down the road came a runaway horse, dragging a light carriage on its side. As the animal was not coming so *very* fast, he stood in the middle of the road, with both arms extended. The first thing he knew Winifred Keith came flying along a side path, ahead of the vehicle (her head over shoulder, calling to Ranger, who sprang out at the horse) and consequently ran square into his arms! He closed them calmly around her and lifted her out of the way. Then, as the horse flew by, he dropped them at his sides; in fact, he clasped them behind him! Her hat was off, and the strings dangled loosely about her throat. Then Ranger commenced jumping up, and her scarlet cloak was draping her comically, and *Percy Farrer was looking on!* There was no use in setting her teeth, for it was "all over," as the dentists say, and there was no use in scolding, for *words* could not *express* her chagrin! What *was* she to do?

"The luck of the right is scarcely better than the luck of the left—is it?"

"How came *you* here?" said she severely.

"Indeed—how came *you* here, *Miss Sophia?*"

"I'm sure you might have remained at home *one* day in the week, I should think!" she returned, ignoring the name.

"Let me tell you all about it, Miss Sophia," he began, sanctimoniously, looking about for a log whereon to sit.

"I don't wish to hear it."

"Yes, you do, 'W. S.,' you're *dying* to hear it."

"Speak quickly. I must return. Aunt Martha is expecting me."

"I regret to remind the speaker her veracity is at fault. Aunt Martha has gone over to Wycoff's Mill. Miss Sophia drove her over this morning."

She stamped her foot, and muttered some unpleasant things to herself.

"I saved your life just now, 'W. S.'"

"*I* can't help it."

"Your father and mother will be greatly obliged to me."

"I have no father or mother."

"Sit down here—just one minute," he said, penitently; but taking advantage of the modulation in her voice, "there is one person who will *always* be *immensely* grateful to me," he resumed.

"Who is it?"

"Mr. Percy Farrer."

"Well, as long as I am going to live here with my aunt, it is rather natural you should find it unpleasant to visit a cripple."

"Or, being under the necessity of attending your funeral. Yes, 'tis rather natural. The only unhappy part of it is, you *compelled* me to save your life, thus checking any latent heroism I *might* have had in the bud."

"I think you are very unkind."

"So I am, considering *my* year will no longer be immemorial."

"I think you are unkind *now* in the extreme."

"See, 'W. S.,' don't turn away. When you came along the road that day I was on the verge of suicide."

She turned her frightened eyes upon him.

"Is there insanity in your family?" she asked, with professional comicality.

The woods rang with his sonorous laugh.

"Oh, you delightful little hypocrite!"

She stepped back, with the air of Queen Bess.

"*Insanity* I can excuse, *impertinence* never," she retorted, with a hysterical ring in her hauteur.

"Why, 'W. S.,' are you crying?"

"*Crying?*" she echoed, indignantly. "*Do you suppose* I'd shed a tear in *your* presence?"

"No, I don't suppose you would, if you could help it," he added, with a tremendous sneeze. "Nor should *I* so disgrace myself—if—I—could—help it," he managed to articulate before a repetition followed.

All of a sudden her repressed gravity of days and weeks gave way—her laugh rang out joyously, unrestrainedly, and his face grew strangely bright as he caught it. She held out her hand frankly to him.

"I do not like you *any better*, you know, only you are so outrageously queer that my risible muscles can't stand the test one minute longer."

A CLEANLY PARTY.

FOREIGN PARTY.—"Is dat der Herr Schmidt at home?"
HOUSEMAID.—"No, sir, he have gone out!"
FOREIGN PARTY.—"Do you know vere he ist goned to?"
HOUSEMAID.—"No, sir, but I think he 'ave bin hinvited to a party, cos I seed him a washin' hisself just now."

Now that she held out her pretty hand to him, he grew very grave and shy, and took it as if he had picked up some dainty bird. They walked home, and he dined with Aunt Martha that day.

Another time, when Winifred had laughed out up-stairs, the old lady said:

"Winnie, the other day Percy Farrer said, 'I'd like to hear just such a laugh in the little boudoir at home.'"

"Hem! I dare say," returned 'W. S.,' making a very wry face.

Christmas morn dawned gloriously, decked in nature's royal jewels. Miss Keith came out of the little chapel, after having taught the children the anthems. She was looking over the village churchyard, with its winding-sheet of snow, when Percy Farrer came up to her.

"Merry Christmas!" she gayly exclaimed.

"Ditto, but I haven't had a single present."

"Haven't you?" said she in commiseration.

"No, and I really had the brass to ask Aunt Martha for one."

"Well, really!"

"She says she'll give me something, if you think it suitable."

"What is it? Do you like it?"

"Yes."

"Have you been wanting it any time?"

"Well, yes."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you *now*, *she* wouldn't like it."

"Oh, nonsense! Don't be so mysterious."

He shook his head negatively.

"Tell what letters it commences and ends with. I'll venture I can guess."

He gazed steadily ahead for a second, then took his cane and traced two letters in the snow. She looked over his shoulder and saw "W. S." A dead silence. Then she hastily pulled down her veil and laughed out quite clearly. She took a handful of snow and began shaping it into a firm, hard ball; then dropping it hastily, she lowered her head and ran into the chapel.

Whether he followed or lingered outside, "expectant of her," I dinna ken; but certain it is that they both returned the same road. 'Pon honor they did—the old sexton said so!

MOTHERS-IN-LAW.

DEAR POST:—Will you be so kind as to allow me space to say a word in behalf of the much-abused mother-in-law? Who has gotten up such a bedlam about the mothers-in-law, I'd like to know? Why is the mother-in-law *always* the "black sheep?" I believe I will venture to say, and I expect to have the POST and all its host of wise scribblers pitch into me for the assertion—but nevertheless I stick to the opinion—that the son-in-law or daughter-in-law is as much to blame, nine times out of ten, as the mother-in-law. Now *I* write from experience. I was once a daughter-in-law, now I am a mother-in-law. And though "I say it that shouldn't," (as the Irishman said,) I have always tried to be a mother, and more than a mother to my daughter-in-law. But, alas! the same old tune—can't please her.

Our sons must marry.

They bring home a pretty creature. Just the best girl in the world; industrious, neat and saving. She will be *such* a help to *mother*. Then everything is laid aside, to make preparations for the new daughter. One week, and then two, three. Still we are expected to wait breakfast *every morning*, then wait upon them as though they were strangers, of some special note. By and by there is an effort made to get the newly-married couple to "fix up" for housekeeping.

But, oh! that requires a little work and effort. Then it will cost something, and they conclude it is best to stay with father and mother this winter. Thus the good-natured children settle themselves down to be waited on by the "intolerable mother-in-law," a term of months, indefinite; or the mother-in-law must raise a "*row!*" and get a bad name. That is just how it generally comes about. Now, I prefer a "row" at once; let them start right out, and take care of themselves. They will think more of you in the long run, and be glad to come back and see you after awhile, especially if they need a favor.

AUNT MATTIE.

"Of Respectable Family."

BY GLEN CAROL.

We wonder if it makes any difference what a man's own, real character is, so that he comes of "respectable family?" We wonder if it makes any difference if he smokes, chews, drinks, and is addicted to other *small* vices, generally, so long as his *family* is unexceptionable? A man may be dissolute, a spendthrift, an utter profligate; he may not possess a single trait of character which stamps as noble and worthy those whose name he bears; yet, at a wave of his imperial hand, and a magic whisper in Society's ear, he is at once admitted to the charmed circle where wealth and wit and beauty reign! The password cannot fail, and he has it in possession. Truly, the "*Family*" has need of broad shoulders, when it must needs be packed with all the follies and shortcomings appertaining to *one* of its members!

"Of respectable family," forsooth!

It seems to be a prevailing idea that respectability is inherited. It is a mistake. Some of the greatest rascals whom we have ever known came of most excellent families, whose very name they had by their outrageous conduct disgraced, and *ought* to have forfeited. It seems to us, if we were a young lady, we should prefer for a husband a man who depended upon *himself*, upon his own good and just actions for place and position—a man who could by sheer perseverance and bravery *live down*, if need be, the prejudice existing, perhaps, against him because of a parent's blotted name, instead of a chattering jackanapes, devoid of brains, or a polished "man of the world," who puts what brains he possesses to bad uses, and both of whom require as an everlasting prop and anchor their unfortunate "*family!*" A fig for the man who cannot make for himself a name to be proud of, independent of "family," friend, or foe!

☞ On the occasion of the marriage of the Duke of Edinburg to the only daughter of the Emperor of Russia the wedding feast will be graced by a bride's cake, of which the following description is given: "The cake towers to a height of seven feet six inches, and weighs upward of two hundred and thirty pounds. It is in six tiers and resembles the famous porcelain tower of Nankin. The cake is covered with a fretwork of flowers and shells of snow-white purity, while gracefully depending from a vase of exquisite design at the summit is a profusion of orange blossoms, &c."

Answers to Correspondents.

PAY YOUR POSTAGE.—Authors and others often send us letters and manuscripts not fully paid. In these cases the Department here enforces payment of the deficiency—which we either have to pay, or to decline receiving the letters or manuscripts. Authors will also bear in mind that the Department now requires letter postage on all manuscripts—therefore it is often cheaper, as it is always safer, to send large packages by express.

WE cannot undertake to answer questions relating to the acceptance or rejection of manuscripts in this column. And there is no occasion of writing to ask whether we will examine a manuscript. Send it on, and we will examine it; keeping a copy, to avoid all danger of loss—as we do not hold ourselves responsible for the safe return of manuscript.

C. D. H., (Monmouth, Ills.,) asks: "1st. How many voters were in the United States at the Presidential election last November? and how many votes were cast for Greeley? 3d. What is the number of Democrats in the regular army at Washington, and also the number of Republicans? 3d. Could a person obtain books from which to learn the German language? 4th. What grammars are used in the public schools of Philadelphia. 5th. What is the cause of the present war in Spain. 6th. How is my writing for a sixteen-year old lad?" 1st. There were cast for Grant 3,597,070 votes. For Greeley 2,834,079. In all 6,421,149 votes. 2d. To obtain an answer to this question we should need to go to Washington, and ask the men, one by one, concerning their political persuasion. It would not pay. 3d. Yes. But he would learn much more rapidly with the aid of a teacher. 4th. Some of the schools use Hart's Grammar, others use Fowsmith's. 5th. It is caused by the efforts of the monarchists to overthrow the Republican government, and put on the throne Don Carlos, the cousin of Queen Isabella, and grandson of Charles IV. 6th. Not bad for your age.

A READER, (Harrisburg, Pa.,) asks: "Is Edward Rutledge the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence? 2d. Who is the author of Rutledge, and where can the book be procured?" 1st. Yes. He was born in November, 1749. The next youngest Thomas Lynch was born in August, 1749. 2d. Miriam Coles is the author of Rutledge. Any bookseller can procure you the work by your leaving an order.

CONSTANT READER, (Easton, Pa.,) writes: "Will you please answer me a few questions in your valuable paper, of which I have been a constant reader for a number of years? 1st. Where is Brown's College, in what city and State? 2d. If a gentleman meets a lady at a party, is it proper for him to call, without an invitation, or is an invitation necessary? 3d. Is it proper for a gentleman who is engaged to correspond with ladies who are very great friends of his, if the lady to whom he is engaged does not object? 4th. What do you think of my handwriting?" 1st. It is situated at Providence, Rhode Island. 2d. That depends largely on circumstances, and especially the custom of the place. In general, if the lady has appeared to take pleasure in his society, he might perhaps venture on a brief call without an invitation. He could judge by his reception whether to call again. 3d. We see no objection to it—if his betrothed does not object. Though he probably is not very deeply in love, if he can find time to keep up a frequent correspondence with other ladies. 4th. Very fair.

TRANO, (Atlanta, Ga.,) asks: "After you are introduced to a girl or young lady, which must speak first when they meet? I mean after they part the first time. I think it is the girl's place to speak first. What do you think of my writing?" The lady, the books say, should be allowed to give some sign of recognition first—a smile or a nod being sufficient to show that she is willing to keep up the acquaintance. But many young ladies are so diffident, that you had better speak on sight. Ladies will generally excuse a little excess of zeal in such cases—while they do not fancy a bashful man.

ENQUIRER, (Steuben, N. Y.,) asks: "1st. Is there a comet to appear this year, and about what time will it appear? 2d. What will be the cost of a good telescope, and where can it be obtained? 3d. Is not the name of the author of the story entitled 'Red Kelly' an assumed name? 4th. Can you tell me where I can obtain the book, entitled 'Gray's Elegy,' and at what price?" 1st. There are comets appearing every year, but seldom any visible to the naked eye. There are only a few comets whose periods are known and whose time of return can be predicted, and we believe none of these will come this year. 2d. Address McAllister & Bros., Chestnut street, Philadelphia, for information on this point. 3d. We do not feel at liberty to answer questions of this kind. Our authors have rights which we are bound to respect, and this is one of them. 4th. You can find it in Gray's Poems, which may be obtained anywhere.

KENO, (Pella, Cal.,) says: "I will bother you with a few questions. 1st. Who is Max Adeler, and is that his correct name? 2d. Is there a History of China, written in English, now in circulation? If so, where can I get one and at what price? 3d. I am in love with a young lady here, who does not return my love. How would you advise me to proceed to gain her love? I am confident that no other man has gained her love, which gives me hopes that it may be mine. 4th. Who is the author of the story entitled The White Lady; or, The Brierton Mystery?" 1st. We should think you would know who Max was by this time, if you read his "Observations" every week. He is a friend of Chubbs. 2d. There are numerous histories, partial and complete. Write to some bookseller in San Francisco. 3d. Show her little attentions—such as sending her pretty bouquets, asking her to go to places, &c.; and be always ready to oblige her. If this does not soften her obdurate heart, do not persecute her, but give her up. 4th. The names of the authors, when we know them, and the writers wish them made public, are always given with the stories.

A WHITE BLACKSMITH, (Phila.,) writes: "I would be pleased if you will give me information to regard to the following passage, from a Paper on the Deserts of Africa in Chambers's Information for the People. The preceding part of the article is relative to the treatment of prisoners taken by the Arabs on the desert; but why should they make a distinction in favor of the Jew and the blacksmith? It says:—'The only exceptions to these barbarous usages is in favor of three classes of people; Marabouts are spared out of respect for their sacred character; Jews and blacksmiths from mere contempt. We have not been able to learn the origin of this feeling toward the trade of a blacksmith; but certain it is, that if a man be surrounded by enemies, and despairing of escape, he has only to wrap his head in the hood of his burnoose, and work his arms, as if beating iron. They will not stain their hands with the blood of so abject a wretch.'" This is certainly a very curious custom. We never met with a statement of it before, and are not aware of its origin. In fact it must be involved in mystery, or the writer mentioned would have been able to learn its explanation. There are peculiar customs extant in many nations of which they do not know the origin themselves. Their fathers practiced them, and that is sufficient reason for them to practice them, however absurd they may be. There is this certainty, a good blacksmith is more use to the world than a whole tribe of thieving Arabs, so the members of the profession need not be downcast at the contempt of these desert raiders.

GRIMSHAW, (Marengo, Iowa,) says: "I am a careful reader of your valuable paper, particularly Max's Observations. I am also well pleased with the serials, sketches, &c. Now I wish to ask you a few questions. 1st. On what kind of paper should short articles be written? Should the MS. be folded? If so in what manner? 2d. What do you mean by paying the postage? 3d. Would you, if the author so desired, set the price up to articles?" 1st. It is not very particular what kind of paper is used, so that it be written upon plainly. If great care is taken to make the article readable we can even forgive an occasional negligence in writing. If the MS. is a large one it had better be written on large size note-paper, as then it may be sent without folding. We are certainly plain enough in our directions in regard to prepaying postage. We wish the full amount of stamps placed on every MS. sent us, and do not desire to be subjected to paying half the postage of our correspondents. 3d. Yes. But, as a general thing, the early writings of would-be authors are worth nothing.

I. H. W., (Sagetown,) asks: "Will you please favor me with answers to the following questions? 1st. Is there a complete edition of Alice Cary's poems, published since her death? If so, at what price, and where, can the book be procured? 2d. I am thinking of learning to keep books for a living. Is a book-keeper's place easy to obtain? And what is the usual price in a moderate business firm?" 1st. We have seen no announcement of the publication of a complete edition, and think there has been none made. 2d. A book-keeper's place is not easy to obtain. The supply is much ahead of the demand in this quarter. The salaries paid vary too much for us to give any reliable answer to your question—say from six dollars a week to sixty.

W. W., (Yellow Lane, Ala.,) writes: "I wish to ask you a few questions which may seem very simple to you, but of the greatest importance to me. 1st. Will —— Remedies effect all the cures that they are recommended to cure, if directions be strictly followed? 2d. Is Dr. —— considered to be a very eminent chemist? 3d. Is my writing good enough to study book-keeping without further improvement?" We must answer no to all your questions. We do this presuming that the medicine you refer to, like patent medicines generally, profess to cure a great diversity of ailments. It is true that a number of disorders may arise from derangement of one organ of the body, or from a similar affection of the tissues of different portions of the body. A single remedy, by curing the cause, may thus aid a number of diseases. But the professions of these cure-all remedies include diseases the most diverse in origin and nature. Such professions you may at once set down as fraudulent. The party mentioned is not usually included among eminent chemists. Your writing needs improvement.

[Several letters are held over to be answered in our next.]